

King praises troops for their services

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday visited a number of units of the 12th Royal Mechanised Division and listened to a briefing from the division commander on the duties and tasks of the troops. The commander of one of the formations presented an outline of the nature and the progress of training courses. The King who was accompanied by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Marei Kaabneh, addressed the troops, praising their efforts and services to the nation. Referring to the Armed Forces' contribution to the U.N. peace keeping missions, the King said the Jordanian soldiers' performance won them the admiration of the whole world.

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Yemen's president swears in new government

SANAA (R) — Yemen's new government headed by Prime Minister Faraj Said Ben Ghanem was sworn in Saturday by President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a government official said. The 28-member cabinet took the oath of office one day before the new parliament holds its first session after last month's general election, in which Mr. Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) won a landslide victory. The official told Reuters parliamentarians were expected to elect Sheikh Abdullah Ben Hussein Ahmar as speaker. Mr. Ahmar heads the minority Islah Party, the GPC's Islamist junior coalition partner in the outgoing government. "Members of the General People's Congress will vote in favour of reelecting Al Ahmar as speaker," the official said.

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Press and Publications Law boasts stiffer penalties on newspapers and journalists

Legislation allows government to keep shares in dailies

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law, put into force yesterday evening, are expected to give the government power to reign in the weekly tabloids and exact heavy fines on editors, publishers and journalists who violate the provisions of the existing law.

The amendments, ratified by a Royal Decree, include several dramatic changes, largely assumed to target what officials have described as an unruly tabloid press, often accused of sensational reporting and lack of credibility.

Journalists also anticipate that the ability of the mainstream press to analyse or comment on events will also be severely curtailed.

While abolishing imprisonment of those who violate the law — actually only

applicable to violations of Article 44 which prohibits the acceptance of gifts or financial assistance — the amendments prescribe prohibitive fines and stringent requirements bound to put several of the country's 20-odd weeklies out of business unless they can abide by the new restrictions and requirements.

A prominent feature of the amendments is the revision and expansion of Article 40 — the "ten commandments" governing news coverage.

Article 40's clauses, which prohibited "news which disparages the King or the Royal family, the armed forces, the security forces, heads of friendly states" and a host of other issues, now forbids the publication of "news, views, opinions, analysis, information, reports, caricatures, photos or any sort of publication that disparages" any

of the above, threatens national unity or endangers the national currency.

A new sub-article also forbids the publication of any government document that is confidential in nature.

Fines for offences under articles 40 and 42 (the publication of proceedings of cases pending before the courts) originally did not exceed JD1,000, and fines for offences under Article 44 did not exceed JD5,000.

The amendments concerning all three articles now impose a minimum fine of JD15,000 and a maximum of JD25,000, while giving the courts the right to suspend publication of any paper found in violation of articles 40 and 42. Suspension of publication can only be revoked by the authorisation of the minister of information after the paper settles its fine.

A main provision of the

amendments compels daily newspapers to increase their capital from a minimum of JD50,000 to JD600,000. Weeklies must increase theirs from a minimum of JD15,000 to JD300,000. Both must do so within three months.

While the three mainstream Arabic dailies and a new Arabic daily, that began publishing yesterday, already have capital far exceeding what is required by law, editors and owners claim that most weeklies will not be able to raise such a volume and therefore will be forced to close. Additionally, the amendments have expanded the list of prerequisites for aspiring editors and include a clause requiring that "responsible editors at any paper should have at least ten years experience."

Finally, the cancellation of an article instructing the government to divest of its

equity in the press establishments by yesterday ended months of confusion and speculation as to the fate of government-owned shares in Al Ra'i and Al Dustour.

The cancellation of the clause will allow the government to maintain, via the Social Security Corporation and the Jordan Investment Corporation, a controlling interest in Al Ra'i (61 per cent), and approximately 32 per cent equity in Al Dustour, and implicitly allows the government to purchase shares in any newspaper.

In a statement to Jordan News Agency, Petra, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi said that the amendments "would raise the ceiling of freedom" and would be "an incentive for journalists to have responsibility commensurate with the level of that freedom."

Minor amendments to electoral law far from most opposition aspirations

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Minor administrative adjustments to the electoral law have been introduced by Royal Decree signed by His Majesty King Hussein on Thursday and published on Saturday.

The Royal Decree to regulate this autumn's elections leaves unchanged the number of seats in the Lower House, the voting age (19), and the allocation of seats for each district.

The most important change affects the number of constituencies, which have now been raised from nine to 13 due to the "promotion" of three former districts to the rank of constituencies and the creation of a new constituency through the division of a former one into two.

The former constituency of Ma'an has been split into the Aqaba and the Ma'an governorates.

Aqaba has been allocated two Muslim seats, while Ma'an will elect three Muslim deputies.

According to the 1993 electoral regulations, the Ma'an constituency, comprising Aqaba, elected five deputies.

The other three new constituencies are: Madaba, formerly Amman's sixth district; Jerash, formerly Irbid's second district; and Ajloun, formerly Irbid's third district.

The three "promoted" governorates will elect the same number of deputies they were allocated as "districts": Madaba will

elect one Christian and two Muslim deputies; Jerash will be represented in the Lower House by two Muslim deputies; Ajloun will have one Christian and two Muslim representatives.

The governorate of Amman, which, according to the Department of Statistics, held an estimated population of 1,631,000 in 1995, accounting for 38 per cent of the Kingdom's 4,291,000 total population, will elect 18 deputies, corresponding to 22.8 per cent of the 80 seats in the Lower House.

The newly created Aqaba constituency, with an estimated population of 85,800, was allocated under the Royal Decree one seat less than Ma'an, the population of which is estimated to be 85,880.

The governorate of Karak holds four per cent of Jordan's total population, but it is allocated seven Muslim seats and two Christian seats, more than 10 per cent of the Lower House's seats.

In the animated debate which anticipated the signing of the Royal Decree, opposition parties and independents had repeatedly called for the redrawing of electoral districts according to the density of population.

Covering all issues of public concern in a televised speech to senior officers of the Armed Forces on Wednesday, His Majesty King Hussein explained why these elections are not based on representation per population.

(Continued on page 2)

Crown Prince receives Canadian Mideast envoy

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Saturday stressed the need to focus on the humanitarian aspects of the Palestinian refugees problem which, he said, should be solved on the basis of international law that guarantees their right to compensation and/or return.

During a meeting with the Canadian special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, Andrew Robinson, Prince Hassan also said donor countries and the international community should continue to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) so that it can carry out its mandate to the Palestinian refugees.

Prince Hassan said improving the living conditions of Palestinian refugees is a humanitarian issue that is not in any way connected to their political rights and aspirations which Jordan believes should be fully met.

The Crown Prince noted Jordan's efforts to improve the living conditions of all Jordanians and fight poverty and unemployment have been implemented on non-discriminatory basis. Prince Hassan said the social productivity package

which the Kingdom recently adopted is aimed at increasing social productivity and curbing poverty and unemployment among all less fortunate sectors of society, including refugees.

He said there should be more focus on practical aspects of the lives of refugees without touching on their political rights and aspirations.

Mr. Robinson expressed appreciation of the social productivity package which he described as a humanitarian effort aimed at providing refugees with a better life.

The Crown Prince and Mr. Robinson, whose country chairs the working group on refugees in the multilateral track of the peace process, also discussed regional and international efforts to deal with the refugees problem.

During the meeting, which was attended by Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh, the Crown Prince reiterated Jordan's commitment to building a just peace on the basis of international law, and emphasised the Kingdom's support for the Palestinian people and their leadership in their efforts to regain all their rights.

Hizbollah says 2 fighters died in clashes with Israeli troops

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Hizbollah guerrilla group Saturday confirmed that two of its fighters were killed and another seven wounded during a clash with Israeli soldiers in south Lebanon this week.

The Islamic Resistance, the armed wing of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah, announced in a statement "the martyrdom of two fighters Ahmad Musavi and Mahdi Shams during a heroic battle with an Israeli commando."

It said another seven were wounded in the clash Thursday night in which Israel said three of its soldiers were killed.

Israeli warplanes mounted two more raids on Hizbollah positions in southern Lebanon late Friday, in the latest upsurge in fighting in the region, Lebanese police said earlier Saturday.

ground missiles by Phantom fighter-bombers shortly before 11 p.m. wound up a day of air and artillery attacks following the death of the three Israeli soldiers.

In all 19 air attacks were staged against Hizbollah positions and more than 400 shells fired by Israeli artillery. It was not known if they caused any casualties.

It was the biggest Israeli attack since the 17-day "Grapes of Wrath" campaign in Lebanon in April last year which killed 175 people, mainly civilians.

Hizbollah replied by firing around 40 mortar rounds on the Israeli-occupied zone, security sources said.

An Israeli army spokesman in Jerusalem said Friday that three Israeli soldiers and two Hizbollah fighters were

(Continued on page 2)



A Turkish soldier mans a sand-bag fortified check-point on Saturday on the main road near Turkey's Habur border gate to northern Iraq. In the background an armoured personnel carrier drives past trucks lined up to cross the border into Iraq (Reuters photo)

EU asks Turkey to withdraw from Iraq; 900 rebels killed

Combined agency dispatches

THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) has called on Turkey to pull its military forces out of northern Iraq as soon as possible and warned against any loss of civilian life.

"It (EU presidency) calls on Turkey to exercise the utmost restraint, to respect human rights, not to endanger the lives of innocent civilians and to withdraw its military forces from Iraqi territory as soon as possible," the EU said in a statement released by the Dutch government Friday evening.

The Dutch hold the EU presidency until the end of June.

Turkish troops, tanks and air power have pounded rebel Kurdish positions inside northern Iraq in an assault by at least 10,000 troops in a remote mountainous region against camps of the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in Iraq killing at least 900 rebels, according to government sources.

"Notwithstanding its understanding of the Turkish wish to end terrorist actions, the EU presidency stresses that a solution to the Kurdish problem can only be achieved politically, not militarily," the state-

ment added. Iraq's National Assembly on Friday condemned the latest Turkish incursion into northern Iraq, saying Iraq reserved the right to retaliate.

In a statement at the end of an extraordinary session and carried by the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) the Iraqi parliament called for an immediate withdrawal of troops, which it said had caused great damage and many casualties.

"The National Assembly denounced... the new Turkish invasion of northern Iraq and considered it a flagrant aggression against Iraq's sovereignty, security and integrity of its land and airspace," INA said.

INA said the parliament pointed out Iraq "reserved its legitimate right to respond in line with the international law to Turkish aggressive actions and demand compensation for damages."

Turkish forces engaged separatist rebels in isolated clashes in northern Iraq's Sinbat Valley as attention turned Saturday to Ankara's post-incursion plans for the troubled border region.

Military sources in Diyarbakir, nerve centre of Turkey's 12-year fight with the PKK, said the rest of the region was generally quiet. Western aid workers said

Turkish tanks and troops had taken up defensive positions north of the provincial capital Dohuk.

Others fanned out into nearby mountains, but most rebels appeared to have fled, they said. Truck drivers and other travellers leaving the Kurdish "safe haven" carved out by the Western allies after the Gulf war reported few signs of fighting and said the occupying forces appeared to be digging in for a lengthy stay. Fresh supplies of men and equipment moved into Iraq, and United Nations aid convoys were back on the road, witnesses at Turkey's Habur border crossing said.

The operations zone remained under a tight news blackout, enforced by Turkish troops and their Iraqi Kurdish allies, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

Journalists were barred and communications restricted, making independent verification of the scope of the incursion and number of casualties impossible.

The Turkish operation, involving at least 10,000 troops, is the biggest since March 1995. Army commanders vowed then to finish off the PKK but did no more than dent

(Continued on page 2)

Jordan considering Israel's request to allow El Al flights to land in Aqaba

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan is considering granting Israel landing rights for its civilian planes at Aqaba Airport to ease pressure on its airport in Eilat. Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani said Saturday.

Speaking to reporters following a Cabinet session, Dr. Anani said the Israeli request was made during a meeting with Israeli Transportation and Communication Minister Yitzhak Levy in Amman on Thursday.

He said Aqaba Airport is the only airport in the southern region with international runway standards, permitting a large number of planes to land.

Dr. Anani said the Israelis said that more than 150 planes land at Eilat's airport monthly and other planes have to land in an Israeli military airport 45 kilometres from Eilat.

The minister said that the

Iraqis may service their planes in Jordan but not fly them home

yahu on May 8 in Aqaba. Meanwhile, Dr. Anani said that Jordan has approved an Iraqi request to conduct maintenance on six Iraqi planes at Queen Alia Airport which have been parked here since the no-fly-zone was imposed by the United Nations on Iraq. But he ruled out permitting the Iraqi Airways airplanes to fly back to Baghdad.

Dr. Anani said that the Iraqi request was made during a meeting between Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali in Amman last week.

Mr. Aziz requested Jordan's permission to send Iraqi technicians to Amman to maintain the Iraqi planes. "This request does not contradict U.N. sanctions," Dr. Anani said, but added that sending the planes back to Iraq "requires the approval of the United Nations Sanctions Committee."

The issue was also discussed at a meeting between His Majesty King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on May 8 in Aqaba.

Dr. Anani said that the Israeli request was made during a meeting between Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Yitzhak Levy in Amman on Thursday.

Jordan to ask Paris Club to reschedule its foreign debt

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A new round of talks will begin this month in France between Jordan and the Paris Club to reschedule \$2.1 billion of the Kingdom's foreign debt, Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani said Saturday.

Dr. Anani, speaking to reporters following a Cabinet session, said that Jordan is optimistic that it will convince the Paris Club members to accept the Kingdom's request.

"The economic steps the Kingdom has undertaken recently, such as reducing the deficit in its annual budget, increasing exports, the privatisation process Jordan has launched and other things will facilitate the approval of Jordan's request," Dr. Anani said.

He said that Jordan's economic performance in the past three years would assure the Kingdom's major creditors of its ability to repay its debts.

He added that the rescheduling will include foreign debts that the Kingdom must repay between June 1997 and June 2000 to its official creditors. Dr. Anani did not say who will represent Jordan at the May 22 meeting in the French capital.

In 1994, Jordan and the Paris Club reached a three-year agreement to reschedule \$1.2 billion of Jordan's foreign debt, estimated at \$6.5 billion by the end of 1996.

Referring to the U.S. plan to increase its annual assistance to Jordan, the minister said that the Kingdom has not yet been informed of any such plan.

But he added that the subject was raised during His Majesty King Hussein's visit to the United States last month. He said that during the visit, Jordan received a U.S. commitment to raise the annual aid.

U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Friday the American administration is discussing a variety of aid options with Congress concerning Jordan and Israel as well as other countries.

Meanwhile, Dr. Anani said that the Cabinet has approved a study to declare the Aqaba region a free zone, adding that the project will cost more than \$3 billion.

He added that the study envisages a railway project, establishing industrial zones, erecting tourist facilities and other projects to establish the infrastructure for the proposed plan. He said the project needs seven to nine years to be accomplished.

The minister declined to mention the financial sources for such a project.

Court commutes sentences on five found guilty of plotting attacks

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation Saturday commuted a 15-year prison term passed by the State Security Court on five people last year for charges of plotting to carry out extremist attacks to five-year prison term.

The court comprised of Justices Walid Haj Hassan, Mohammad Raqad, Hisham Alian, Abdul Razaq Abu Atham and Mohammad Snadi, stated that the reason it decided to commute the sentence was that "the penalty was too harsh."

"We accept the State Security Court's conviction of the five men, but it was a

severe punishment and we decided to commute it," the court said in its decision.

The five men declared guilty and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment term with hard labour are: Tha'er Yousef Ghanem, 24, Shadi Jawdat Taha, 19, Yousef Ahmad Amar, 22, Ghassan Fa'eq Musmar, 27, and Ibrahim Mohammad Taher Zein Abedein, 27.

The five were originally charged by military prosecution with assault with the intent to block authorities from exercising their due responsibilities in accordance with the Constitution and the distribution of pamphlets slanderous to His Majesty King Hussein.

But the State Security Court in its Nov. 23, 1996

sentencing resolved to amend the charges, which could have carried the death penalty, to a distinct charge of plotting to carry out extremist attacks.

The court had also acquitted the five men of the charges of slandering the King.

A sixth person, Abdul Ruhman Safarini, 22, who was charged only with slandering King Hussein and tried with the five others, was acquitted by the same court for lack of evidence.

The group retracted earlier confessions made to prosecution during court sessions last year, claiming their statements were extracted under duress and that they were "subjected to psychological and mental

torture."

The prosecution charged that five of the six defendants had sprayed the General Intelligence Department (GID) building in Baq'a with bullets on Dec. 26, 1994.

According to the charge sheet, the first and second defendants, Tha'er Ghanem and Shadi Taha, showered the GID building with bullets from machine-guns, injuring one officer, before fleeing the scene.

The prosecution further charged that the defendants started their activities in April of 1994 and plotted to carry out extremist attacks on tourists and security departments in the Kingdom.



SHIITES MARK ASHOURA: A six-year-old Shiite boy beats his head, bloodied with a razor on Saturday in the South Lebanon market town of Nabatieh, as Shiites celebrate the climax of a 10-day mourning period marking the anniversary of the death of Prophet Mohammad's grandson in battle more than 1,300 years ago (Reuters photo)

Khartoum government frees 80 political prisoners

KHARTOUM (AP) — Authorities have freed 80 political prisoners in what the attorney general said was a gesture of goodwill to encourage wider participation in drafting a new constitution for Sudan.

General director of prisons and reform, Major General Al Rayah Al Sheikh Al Rayah, announced the release to the official Sudan News Agency (SUNA) on Saturday, saying they were in line with "the directive of the national security and defence council."

The council comprises senior government and security officials and is chaired by President Omar Al Bashir. Last week, it ordered the release of "all persons detained in political cases ... as soon as possible."

Al Rayah did not say when the 80 prisoners were released or whether there are others still in detention.

Attorney General Abdul Basit Sabdar said the release was a gesture of goodwill designed to encourage more politicians to take part in the drafting of a new constitution for Sudan.

Rafsanjani warns against vote-tampering in election

TEHRAN (AP) — President Hashemi Rafsanjani warned officials on Friday against vote tampering in next week's election to choose his successor.

"I don't see any sin greater than anyone allowing himself to tamper with the vote of the people," Mr. Rafsanjani said at a Tehran University sermon on the Muslim holy day.

"This treachery will not be forgiven," he said, addressing officials who will supervise voting in next Friday's election, the first since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution to look like a real contest.

The election campaign kicked off Saturday but has shifted into a higher gear now with only a week remaining before balloting.

Large colour photographs of the two leading candidates — Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri and the former culture minister, Mohammad Khatami — are pasted on walls and billboards across the oil-rich Middle East nation.

Less visible are advertisements for the two other contestants — Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, a former intelligence minister, and Syed Reza Zavareie, deputy head of the judiciary.

All four are staunch supporters of Iran's Islamist government and all, except for Mr. Zavareie, are clerics.

Differences inside the ruling clerical hierarchy were never publicly aired during past Iranian elections. But not this time.

Mr. Khatami's conservative backers and Mr. Rafsanjani's moderate faction have formed a loose alliance for the election and both are fighting for political survival.

They face the danger of being crushed by the considerable weight of Mr. Nouri's radical faction, which has the tacit support of powerful supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

He has the last word on all matters in the day-to-day running of the country. In return for his backing, Mr. Nouri and his faction have helped elevate Ayatollah Khamenei almost into a saint.

It was the ayatollah who ruled out any change in the constitution to allow Mr. Rafsanjani, who will step down in August, to run for a third term.

Among Iranians, Mr. Khatami appears to be the more popular.

There are suspicions,

however, that no matter what happens at the ballot boxes Mr. Nouri will emerge as the winner because Ayatollah Khamenei wants him to.

The Salam daily, which backs Mr. Khatami, on Thursday published an anonymous letter from a woman who wrote that she had asked many people about their favourite candidate.

"Everyone I asked said they would vote for Khatami, but that Nateq Nouri would win regardless."

Ayatollah Khamenei said in February he would endorse any candidate that wins at the polls. But earlier this week he said it was natural for him to have a favourite.

"It is natural for me to have a preference. No one has known these gentlemen better than I," he said in a speech widely broadcast by the state-run radio and television.

In a bid to appear impartial, he named no names.

"Khamenei's comments were as clear as if he had given Nateq Nouri's name and address," commented an Iranian journalist, who did not want to be identified.

Remains of ancient church damaged during Har Homa construction

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Remains of an ancient church, including a floor mosaic, were damaged during the construction of a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, and contractors ignored a stop-work order by archaeologists, the Israel Antiquities Authority said Saturday.

Work near Kathisma Church — built on the site where tradition says a pregnant Mary rested on her way to Bethlehem — was only halted after police enforced the order, said Gideon Avni, the Jerusalem district archaeologist for the Antiquities Authority.

The construction of the Jewish settlement on the southern outskirts of Arab east Jerusalem began in March and triggered a deep crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian relations. The settlement is being built

in the part of Jerusalem occupied by Israel since 1967 Mideast war and claimed by the Palestinians as a future capital.

The Palestinians said they would not resume peace talks with Israel unless construction is halted.

Ibrahim Kandalaft, the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) representative for Christian affairs, said the damage to the church remains was a further reason to call off the whole construction project — 6,500 apartments for Jews.

However, the stop-work order issued by the Antiquities Authority only refers to a small area near the Kathisma Church, not to the whole project.

Mr. Avni said the damage was discovered last Wednesday, during a routine inspection by the Antiquities Authority of

the construction site.

Workers had dug a trench near the church remains to lay a water pipe, and in the process damaged the church's foundation and part of the floor mosaic. The remains of the church have not been excavated, but bits of mosaic and stone chips indicated that the site had been disturbed, Mr. Avni said.

"Everyone has worked not to touch the archaeological sites but some fools did by taking some bulldozer to the wrong place for a few hours. This is not a planned action, but a pirate action," Mr. Avni said.

Mr. Avni said the church was one of the most important archaeological sites in the vicinity of Arab east Jerusalem. It is one of only four or five churches in the holy land with an octagonal

foundation, he said.

Antiquities Authority spokeswoman Osnat Gaoz said antiquities inspectors issued a stop-work order Thursday, but were ignored by the contractor. Construction in the area only stopped Friday when the order was delivered by police.

The church, surrounded by olive trees, was built over a rock where tradition says Mary rested on her way to Bethlehem, just six kilometres away. It lies at the entrance to an olive tree-lined road.

The church remains were discovered during a 1991 salvage dig ahead of the widening of the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road. The remains are under the control of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Minor amendments to electoral law

(Continued from page 1)

"There are areas in Jordan which for a long time have been deprived of securing their basic needs," the King said, "and, therefore, the proportion and representation agreed upon for each district are enough to make us hear their voices in all parts of the country, so that we can meet their needs in a suitable manner."

The Islamic Action Front (IAF) in the past months has led the chorus of criticisms against the one-person, one-

vote system, introduced by Royal Decree ahead of the 1993 elections for the 13th legislature. The Islamists have perceived the move as aimed at decreasing their representation in Parliament. In Jordan's tribal society, when given only one vote, voters would choose their family's candidate and tribal considerations would overpower political affiliations and beliefs, they said.

In an interview with the Jordan Times last week, IAF Secretary General Ishaq Farhan defined the current

electoral law as "unfair and unconstitutional."

Former Prime Minister Taher Masi has also criticised the electoral formula and the allocation of seats as a means to "keep the Parliament docile."

In a recent interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Masi said that the 1993 electoral regulations were "aimed at minimising the influence and number of opposition groups, mainly the Islamists, and increase tribal influence."

However, the centrist National Constitutional Party (NCP), recently born from the merger of one larger and eight

smaller political parties, welcomed "with satisfaction" on Saturday issuing of the amendments.

"It is better not to have any changes rather than having controversial changes," maintained newly-appointed NCP Secretary General Abdul Hadi Majali. "We do not believe this is absolutely the best system, but major changes to the electoral law require long discussions," Mr. Majali told the Jordan Times.

"We will discuss the 'modernisation' of the law with the next Parliament, when we will have all the time we need," he concluded.

Hizbollah says 2 fighters died

(Continued from page 1)

killed in Thursday's clash north of the "security zone" but the Hizbollah deaths were only confirmed Saturday.

Seven Israeli soldiers were also injured in the fighting, which erupted when Israeli parachute commandos stumbled across a Hizbollah patrol while on exercises, said the spokesman.

The Hizbollah spearheads the guerrilla war to force Israel to withdraw from the buffer zone it set up in southern Lebanon in 1985 to protect its northern border.

So far this year 15 Hizbollah militants and nine Israeli soldiers have been killed in the ongoing war in southern Lebanon.

EU asks Turkey to withdraw from Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

the insurgency, which has claimed more than 22,000 lives.

Talk then of a permanent "security zone" inside Iraq was abandoned amid an international outcry but many senior commanders believe it is the only way to halt PKK infiltration.

Already, close ally the United States, joined by Britain and France, have said Turkey must limit the size and duration of its incursion. Fighters were returned to

their families in Dohuk Thursday and Friday after clashes with the PKK. The INA had no word on Turkish casualties, but military sources said twelve Turkish soldiers had been killed since the operation was launched Wednesday. Truck drivers crossing into Turkey said local people were angry that Massoud Barzani, head of the KDP, was cooperating with the Turks. Reuters correspondent Osman Senkal reported from the Turkish-Iraqi border crossing.

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JORDAN TELEVISION

TEL 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:00 Doc. — The Global Family
16:30Energy Express
17:10 Documentary — Clear War Big Fish
18:00French Programmes
19:30News headlines
19:35 Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00Doc. — World Echo
20:30 Medical Drama — Side Effects
21:10Doc. — Nautilus
22:00News in English
22:25 Series — One West Walkie
23:15Sisters

PRAYER TIMES

04:03Fajr
05:32Sunrise/Duha
12:32Dhuhr
16:13Asr
19:32Maghrib
21:01Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeth, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590 Church of the Annunciation

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

TEL 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 691757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771531.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Holy Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Moderate weather conditions will prevail with temperatures around average and winds northwesterly

moderate to active. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.
Min/Max temp.
Amman14/29
Aqaba21/37
Deserts13/33
Jordan Valley19/36
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 29, Aqaba 38 Humidity readings: Amman 28 per cent, Aqaba 23 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Salman Al Daboubi776751
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi894788
Dr. Bassam Karadsheh759200
Dr. Yousef Al Faqih790104
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdous pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Nairoukh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730

Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najib pharmacy847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qana281484
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Samir Al Lawal989601
Khalifeh pharmacy985417
EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192 621111 637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre813813/32
Khaldi Maternity644281/6
Akhileh Maternity642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital667277/9
The Islamic, Abdali666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199

Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
J. Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Co.636381
RJ Flight Information08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 19815200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be updated on phone 08 (52700)

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)986732
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)980560
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275553
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital(02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)314111

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
09:35Jeddah (RJ)
09:50Larnaca (RJ)
10:10Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:30Bombay (RJ)
10:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:05Beirut (RJ)
11:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
17:15Brussels (RJ)
18:00Paris (RJ)
18:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:50London (RJ)
19:10Athens (RJ)
19:20Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
20:30Tunis (RJ)
20:40Frankfurt (RJ)
21:10Rome (RJ)
21:10Vienna (RJ)
01:10Cairo (add) (RJ)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:20Beirut (RJ)
10:45Frankfurt (RJ)
12:10Tunis (RJ)
12:30Rome (RJ)
12:30Vienna (RJ)
12:35Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:20London (RJ)
13:30Athens (RJ)
21:10Cairo (RJ)
21:15New Delhi (RJ)
21:20Jeddah (RJ)
21:40Damascus (RJ)
22:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:00Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
23:10Bangkok (RJ)
23:40Sanaa (RJ)
Other Flights
13:30Jeddah (SV)
13:30Sanaa (TY)
14:25Doha (GF)
16:35Moscow (SU)
22:25Cairo (MS)
00:45Amsterdam (KL)
02:00Cairo (MS)
07:00Beirut (ME)
07:55London (BA)

Other Flights

12:00Sanaa (TY)
12:00Jeddah (SV)
13:35Bahrain (GF)
15:20Moscow (SU)
21:10Beirut (RJ)
21:35Cairo (MS)
23:20Istanbul (TK)
00:59Cairo (MS)

Crown Prince emphasises human dimension of regional situation

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan Saturday emphasised the importance of focusing on the humanitarian dimension of the Middle East situation.

"Reference to this region always takes place within the perspective of security and oil at the expense of the humanitarian dimension and the spirit of the peace process," Prince Hassan said, during a meeting with Monsignor Robert Stern, head of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine.

In the presence of Secretary of the Vatican Embassy Monsignor Raouf Najjar and the Crown Prince's office director Michel Hamameh, Prince Hassan detailed the recent adoption of a social security net which, he said, aims at poverty and unemployment

alleviation as well as improving the standard of living for the underprivileged in Jordan, including Palestinian refugees.

This programme does not stipulate the incorporation or assimilation of refugees into the Jordanian society, he explained.

Monsignor Stern, who heads his mission from his office in the United States, lauded the policies of His Majesty King Hussein and Prince Hassan as well as their efforts to ensure security and stability in Jordan. He said that the Vatican's policy towards Jerusalem was defined, clear and has not changed in any form.

Also Saturday, Crown Prince Hassan emphasised the importance of utilising Jordan Armed Forces workshops in serving national industry as well as benefit-

ing from its retired servicemen's experience.

The Crown Prince was chairing the first meeting of the Royal Commission for the Development of Defence Resources at army headquarters.

Prince Hassan also suggested expanding the commission's work through qualified civil and military sector advisory committees.

Last Tuesday, His Majesty King Hussein announced the formation of the Royal Commission, upon the recommendation of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Abdul Salam Majali, under the chairmanship of Crown Prince Hassan.

According to a Royal Decree, the commission will aim at broadening coordination and coopera-

tion between the Jordan Armed Forces and scientific research organisations, universities and national industries in order to benefit from highly qualified human resources.

The commission will also work towards improving the investment environment, enhancing the competitiveness of national industry and increasing the productivity of the national economy.

Earlier, Prince Hassan met with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafiz Marai Kaabneh, HRH Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, and senior army officers with whom he discussed issues related to the Armed Forces.

Cabinet shuffles officials in ministerial posts

AMMAN (J.T.) — During its regular session, the Council of Ministers Saturday reshuffled a number of senior government officials who have been serving as ministry secretaries general or department heads.

These included the following: Nayef Molla, formerly advisor at the Prime Ministry, became director general of the Press and Publications Department; Thouqan Obaidat, formerly of the Ministry of Education, became secretary general of the Ministry of Culture and Youth; Dr. Mohammad Smadi, formerly secretary general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, became secretary general of the Ministry of Supply; Mohammad Halaiqah, formerly director of the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation, became secretary general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade; Hashem Shbouh, formerly advisor at the Prime Ministry, became secretary general of the Ministry of Agriculture thus replacing Ghaleb Abu Orabi who has been retired; Munther Khleifat has been appointed secretary general of the Water Authority, replacing Quasay Qteishat who has been

appointed secretary general of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation; Mahmoud Abul Ghanam, formerly at the Ministry of Finance, became director of the Department of Purchases; Raef Alami has been appointed Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance, replacing Suleiman Hafez who became Minister of Finance in the government of Dr. Abdul Salam Majali.

The Cabinet also endorsed recommendations from Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha regarding agricultural issues.

Mr. Khreisha described these recommendations as providing assistance to farmers, helping the ministry promote agricultural output through employment of modern technology and increasing produce exports.

He recommended that the government purchase wheat at JD 200 per tonne (an increase over regular market prices) in order to encourage farmers to increase their cereal output, encourage them to remain on their lands and stem migration from rural to urban areas.

The government will soon begin purchasing wheat from local farm-

ers, according to the minister.

Also Saturday, the Cabinet formed a committee comprising the ministers of agriculture and interior to strengthen measures to prevent sheep smuggling into the Kingdom. This was deemed necessary to protect the interests of local livestock breeders and prevent the spread of disease.

The Council of Ministers declined to exempt public or private institutions from customs fees on imported agricultural and food products and imposed customs duty on imported garlic to protect local production.

It also formed a committee comprising officials from the ministries of supply and agriculture to develop a mechanism to modify the current government subsidy on imported powdered milk prices into direct cash subsidies for the poor to protect local fresh milk production and encourage consumers to buy locally-produced fresh milk.

The Cabinet resolved to take appropriate measures to declare the Aqaba region as a zone free of animal disease.

HRH Princess Raiyah opens first Azraq Airforce Base kindergarten

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Martyr Muwafaq Salti Airforce Base in Azraq celebrated the opening of its first kindergarten, which was inaugurated Saturday by Her Royal Highness Princess Raiyah Al Hussein, a Royal Court statement said.

Princess Raiyah distributed certificates to 55 children who had actively participated in establishing the kindergarten which they named after the young princess.

She also toured the Airforce Base's fighter planes, presented educational toys and material to the kindergarten which will serve families of the soldiers living on the base, according to the statement.

Princess Raiyah was received by Base Commander Colonel Mahmoud Irdifa, platoon heads and the children and staff of Al Raiyah kindergarten.



Her Royal Highness Princess Raiyah Al Hussein Saturday inaugurates the first kindergarten at the Martyr Muwafaq Salti Airforce Base in Azraq (Petra photo)

Authorities detain two on suspicion of murder

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Authorities Saturday announced the arrest of two people in connection with the murder of a woman and her daughter, whose decomposing bodies were found Tuesday by police in the Wihdat neighbourhood of Amman, officials said.

The corpses of Amal Ahmad Saleh, 54, an Egyptian national, and her 10-year-old daughter, Zakieh Hussein Abdul Nabi, an Iraqi national, were found by police in the living room of their apartment.

According to one official source, police gathered evidence and monitored individuals who knew the victim, and narrowed their investigation to two individuals who resided in Wihdat.

The official identified the two suspects, both Egyptians, only as J.S., 40, and J.J., 43.

"The two suspects had been engaged in an extramarital affair with Ms. Saleh for some time, and recently, the victim met other people and left [the two suspects]," the source said.

He added that the two men, who confessed and re-enacted their crime, told police that they killed the woman and her daughter "in revenge as she had left them."

An autopsy performed on the victims' bodies determined that they had been dead for seven days previous to their discovery, sources said.

Further, the autopsy stated that Ms. Saleh received several stab wounds and was strangled and that her daughter Zakieh also died of strangulation.

The two bodies were discovered after the building's owner informed police that a foul odour was emitting from Ms. Saleh's apartment.

The victim's husband, an Iraqi national, had left the country three months prior to the murder.

Meanwhile, two people were killed by lightning in Karak Friday, according to Public Security Department (PSD) officials.

Jamil Baqaen, 75, was walking in the Idr section of Karak, and Birges Ahmad, 32, a Syrian shepherd was struck in the Wadi Asmar pastures.

In other incidents in the Kingdom, five people, including one child, were killed in separate road accidents, PSD reports stated.

The deceased were identified as: Faisal Ahmad, two years of age, who was hit by a moving vehicle in the Manara area of Amman; Mohammad Saleh, 30, and Wisam Issa, both killed in a road collision in Amman; Khader Mohammad, 29, who was killed in a road accident in the Wadi Rum area, and Ziad Mifleh, 20, who was hit by a tractor in Irbid.

Cairo meeting centres on inter-Arab solidarity

AMMAN (Petra) — Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Saad Hayel Srour Saturday described Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) meetings held last week in Cairo as centring on solidarity and the economic situation in the Arab World as well as the creation of an Arab common market.

Upon his return to Amman, Mr. Srour maintained that the parliamentarians discussed possible mechanisms to stimulate economic ties among Arab countries as well as the implementation of resolutions passed by the Arab Economic Summit of 1980, held in Amman.

The delegates discussed the impact of global economic blocs on the economy of the Arab World as well as means of boosting inter-Arab cooperation in social and economic fields, according to Mr. Srour.

He said that the delegates discussed a number of significant issues which, among other things, included facilitating the movement of Arab citizens among Arab countries and promoting the investment of Arab capital within the Arab World.

Following the meetings, the parliamentarians issued a comprehensive statement covering various political and economic issues and calling for genuine solidarity among the Arab states.

Mr. Srour said that the Jordanian delegation's participation in the meetings was proved significant, especially in matters connected with inter-Arab economic cooperation.

The delegation accompanying the speaker to the three-day meetings included Senators Salem Masaadeh and Taher Hikmat and Deputies Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, Abdul Hadi Majali, Hamzeh Mansour as well as the Senate Secretary General Zeid Zreikat.

'\$9 m lost daily due to Israeli closures in Palestine'

AMMAN (Petra) — A monthly report of the Palestinian Affairs Department in Amman Saturday quoted officials at the Palestinian Ministry of Trade and Economy as estimating Palestinian people's losses, resulting from Israel's closures, at a daily \$9 million.

According to the report, the amount of total losses was estimated at \$6.5 billion, over the past few months, which raised the rate of unemployment among Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to 70 per cent of the workforce.

Last month, Israeli authorities confiscated 110 dunums of land in the Qalqilyah region and six dunums of land near the village of

Al Jib as well as unspecified areas of land within the regions of 15 other villages, according to the report.

Trees were also uprooted in order to open ring roads around Arab villages and expand existing Jewish settlements built on Arab land, it said.

The report revealed that Israeli planners have arranged for the construction of 1,500 housing units in new settlements while simultaneously expanding existing settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli authorities, last month, approved designs for the Ghuneim settlement near the West Bank town of Jenin and pursued

plans for the construction of the Har Homa settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim within the zone of Arab Jerusalem, the report stated.

In the first quarter of this year, Israeli authorities withdrew the identity cards of 3,000 residents of Arab Jerusalem and dispatched warnings to at least 50,000 Arab Jerusalemites, living outside the holy city, stating that their identity cards would be withdrawn if they did not live within city limits.

Last April, three Palestinian demonstrators in the West Bank were killed by Israelis, the report stated.

Study highlights issues related to households headed by women

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — According to a new study, ten years from now, 53,000 Jordanian families will be headed by women. This number constitutes 17 per cent of the total population as compared to 10 per cent in 1996.

The study, implemented with the participation of 514 women, entitled "Social and Economic Conditions of Women Heading Families," demonstrated that 79.1 per cent of women heading families shoulder that responsibility without benefit of auxiliary support.

Circumstances which led to these women to act as sole family heads were listed as follows: spousal death, constituting 70.3 per cent of the sample; spouses labouring abroad, constituting 8.9 per cent of the sample; divorce, constituting 7.6 per cent of the sam-

ple; father's death, constituting 2.3 per cent of the sample, abandonment or spouse suffering from a physical disability totalling 1.6 per cent each, and 0.3 per cent was attributed to the women being the eldest sisters in a household composed solely of women.

The rest of the sample gave assorted reasons for their familial position such as incarceration of spouse, marriage of elder brothers (thus distancing them from the household), spouses who are otherwise preoccupied, etc.

The study, funded by the International Labor Organisation (ILO) and supported by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), was conducted for the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW).

It was carried out by Seri Nasser, from the Department of Sociology and Bashir Zou'bi from the Department of Economic

and Administrative Sciences, both in the University of Jordan.

Assistant Director for the General Secretariat of the JNCW Layali Abu-Ser informed the Jordan Times that the aim of the study, which mainly concentrated on the social and economic conditions of women heading families, was to correct misconceptions of those who uncritically believe that men's productive abilities naturally exceed those of women.

The study also attempts to increase public awareness regarding women-related issues and change orientations which limit the participation and stimulation of women's involvement in all aspects of life, according to its authors.

In fact, the study shows that an unemployed woman's cost of lost opportunity may exceed the average monthly income of that of a working female which averages

to JD 99.8. Opinions regarding women sharing responsibilities with men differ according to the generations, according to the research. Although 82.1 per cent of the total group polled believes that one person shouldering the entire burden of domestic responsibility is too exhausting and 76.4 per cent would prefer that the man shoulder this responsibility alone, 46.7 per cent of women between the ages of 44-49 would prefer to continue to independently run the household.

Nevertheless, 56.8 per cent of the sample believe that a husband is more capable of disciplining children and 44.1 state that the extended family should help in shouldering the responsibility. As for the social and health conditions of women heading households, 74.3 per cent said that they do, indeed, suffer

from exhaustion, 66 per cent attest to health problems, 53.8 per cent complain of loneliness and 30.2 per cent of the women maintained they feel used by the society.

"Mostly divorced women complain of social harassment," Ms. Abu-Ser explained. "Once a man is aware that [a woman is divorced], his behavior changes."

Divorced women also complain that some men assume that they are easy prey, she added.

Widows also lamented that they feel manipulated by societal mores. "If she is a rich widow, her deceased husband's family might pressure her to marry another member of the family or put obstacles between her and her rightful inheritance," according to Ms. Abu-Ser.

The women also complained of financial problems as 70.3 per cent of them stressed that they are

in need of financial help and 72.4 per cent described their income as insufficient.

"Most of these women live in underprivileged areas, receive help from the National Aid Fund, and are illiterate," Ms. Abu-Ser said.

She added that a common solution to their financial problems is to halt their daughters' education, "hoping to marry them off" as well as "sending their eldest male child, in some cases as young as 10 years of age, to work."

According to the study, only 33.1 per cent of these women own their houses, 7.8 per cent own some means of transportation and 5.7 per cent possess savings.

"Upon the husbands' death, in most of these cases, [it is determined that] they neither possessed social security nor savings," she said.

But despite complaints of

low income, only 5.3 per cent of these women are gainfully employed.

Justifications offered for this range from too much responsibility inside the house (61.4 per cent), not holding suitable qualifications (48.8 per cent), health problems (12.2 per cent) and familial prohibitions (11.3 per cent).

"In many areas, a woman is only permitted to work as a teacher, [however], most of these women are over 50 [years of age] and often illiterate," Ms. Abu-Ser said.

The study stressed the need to educate women so as to achieve financial independence, inform them of financial loans and their conditions, facilitate such loans, change government housing laws which forbid a woman from owning accommodation if her husband already owns a house and recommend the establishment of projects which could be operated from

home.

The study also recommended that women be educated regarding the banking system; the importance of educating their children on duty to their elders, thus safeguarding their future; the importance of supporting women to retain their legal and financial rights; the importance of educating women on keeping household budgets and possible ways of financial investment; aiding women in ending the cycle of poverty and highlighting laws and regulations as pertain to divorced women.

In the near future, two more sub-studies, based on this one, will be conducted. The first one will research the needs of a women heading families in rural areas and their specific needs. The second will study the needs of illiterate women heading families. Ms. Abu-Ser concluded.

WHAT'S GOING ON

PLAY

*Children's play "There is a Smurf in Our Village" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 6:00 p.m.

CONCERT

*Performance by teachers and students of Fredi for Music at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

LECTURE

*Open discussion with painter Najia Mahadji about her artistic works at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m.

Kremlin says it can block some, not all, NATO plans

MOSCOW (R) — Moscow will have a "deciding vote" in NATO decisions affecting Russia but not in internal affairs of the Western defence pact under a treaty agreed this week, the Kremlin's chief spokesman was quoted as saying Saturday.

"There are issues of NATO's inner life, there are issues connected to the activities of NATO as an organisation to which Russia does not belong. Those are NATO's domestic goings on," Sergei Yastrzhembsky told Interfax News Agency.

"As for the sphere of joint activity — and these are stipulated in the document to be signed in Paris — of the mutual interests of Russia and NATO, of the areas where Russia can play the role of partner, then here Russia will have a deciding vote."

Mr. Yastrzhembsky, who is also a foreign affairs adviser to President Boris Yeltsin, was commenting on the apparent contradiction between remarks made by the Kremlin leader and U.S. President Bill Clinton Wednesday, when Russian and NATO negotiators finally agreed a deal on a new relationship.

Mr. Yeltsin said: "Decisions can be taken only by consensus. If Russia is against some decision, it means this decision will not go through."

Mr. Clinton said: "Russia will work closely with NATO but not in NATO, giving Russia a voice but not a veto over NATO's business."

Western officials have explained the apparent discrepancy in the same way as Mr. Yastrzhembsky. A permanent joint NATO-Russia council will give Moscow a say in matters affecting it, but not on other affairs of the alliance.

Mr. Yeltsin, concerned about Russian security and the reaction of nationalist opponents at home, has fiercely opposed NATO's plan to admit former Soviet-Bloc states in Eastern Europe.

But he said the new treaty, to be signed in Paris on May 27, has persuaded him that future relations with Moscow's old Cold War adversary can be peaceful.

Meanwhile, Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov Saturday sharply criticised the NATO security accord with

Russia.

"This treaty is practically an act of capitulation rather than anything else," he told reporters in the Cyprus capital Nicosia after meeting President Glafcos Clerides.

Mr. Zyuganov, speaking through an interpreter and saying he was expressing a personal view, also accused President Yeltsin and former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev of "giving everything they could give."

"The losses of Russia during the World War were about 30 million people and these victims will never excuse the present leaders that they betrayed what they fought for. I consider that the expansion of NATO is the biggest mistake of Europe after the World War II," he said.

The pact is intended to defuse Russian opposition to NATO's planned expansion into former Communist states in Eastern Europe that once formed part of the Soviet Bloc, and to protect Moscow's interests.

NATO's 16 member states Friday formally approved the accord, due to be signed on May 27.

Russia has yet to adopt formally the pact which Mr.

Yeltsin described Thursday as "a really major step aimed at more stability in Europe and the world overall."

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are likely to be invited to join the alliance at a special summit in Madrid on July 8-9, with Slovenia and Romania seen as possible members.

Mr. Zyuganov said his party would work closely with leftist parties in Europe that have already expressed opposition to the expansion of the alliance.

Visiting Cyprus after Syria and Lebanon, he expressed support for efforts towards reuniting the island, divided since Turkey invaded its north in 1974 after a brief coup instigated by the military then ruling Greece.

"Generally we are in favour of more participation of Russia in the settlement of the problems in the Mediterranean area and the Middle East area," he said, but added there was a general feeling that military cooperation between Turkey and Israel, which has unnerved several Arab states, might aggravate the situation.

U.S. unlikely to back Romania, Slovenia for NATO

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States is not inclined to support Romania and Slovenia for NATO membership this year despite a campaign by both countries to join the alliance, senior U.S. officials say.

In interviews this week, they said no final decision had been made and President Bill Clinton could ultimately choose to press the case for one or both countries.

But the officials, reflecting views across the Clinton administration, said there was an emerging consensus that the United States should endorse the three front-runners to be NATO's first new members since the Cold War — Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic — and no more.

"That is the bureaucratic position, to do three as opposed to five" candidates, one senior official told Reuters.

The alliance's 16 leaders are to meet in Madrid July 8-9 and formally issue invitations to its first new members in 15 years. Spain joined in 1982.

The topic is expected to be discussed next week at a U.S.-European Union summit in the Hague and a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Portugal.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who emigrated to the United States from the Czechoslovakia after the World War II, is expected to send Mr. Clinton a formal recommendation around June 1 on which countries should support.

U.S. officials said they then expected to press their position with the other allies during June.

It has been widely accepted for some time that former Communist Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic — more advanced toward NATO goals of democracy, a free-market economy and a military with something to offer NATO — would be offered alliance membership this year.

But Romania and Slo-

venia have mounted aggressive campaigns, hiring paid publicists and sending frequent delegations to Washington and other capitals to lobby support.

Publicly, the administration has maintained neutrality on its preferences — though it did criticise Slovakia for the slow pace of democratic reforms, effectively ruling out consideration of that country at this stage.

Romania has won strong support from France, Italy and Canada. Advocates say NATO membership would encourage Bucharest's pro-Western trend and bolster the alliance flank. But Britain and Germany have been lukewarm about the bid.

U.S. officials praise Romania for making progress toward democracy since reformists pushed ex-Communists out of office for the first time in seven years in elections last November.

But one official told Reuters: "Romania (in terms of reform) is where Poland was in 1991."

And Slovenia has a small military that is just beginning to develop a capability that could "contribute in a tangible way to NATO's defence," the official added.

U.S. officials expect a major fight with the U.S. Senate, which must approve any expansion of NATO, and some are concerned that including weaker candidates like Romania and Slovenia among the first nominees would give critics another reason to oppose expansion.

"How many Americans would go to war to defend Romania?" one critic asked, referring to security guarantees at the heart of the NATO mission.

Washington, expansion's chief proponent, has made clear other European countries will be admitted to NATO later. With this in mind, Romania and Slovenia "make a nice group for a second round (of expansion)," a U.S. official said, suggesting their admission be deferred.

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Cannes Golden Palm looms with no clear favourite

CANNES, France (R) — The Cannes Film Festival ends Sunday with no outright favourites for the coveted Golden Palm award in a 50th birthday edition which all too often turned the silver screen red with blood.

But critics see this year's entries, dominated by thrillers, as largely uninspiring. Cinema audiences can look forward to a heavy diet of violence, seen or unseen, as the Cannes premieres go on general release.

Unlike previous years, international critics' polls by trade magazines failed to pick a clear favourite. Surveys by screen international and moving pictures put Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm* and Curtis Hanson's *La Confidential* in a narrow lead.

Outsiders also tipped by Cannes critics to pick up big prizes include Gary Oldman's *Nil By Mouth*, Michael Winterbottom's *Welcome To Sarajevo* and Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*.

Cannes organiser Gilles Jacob acknowledged the general consensus that "the major international festivals face a rather weak production year."

Weak, and packed with violence and gore, say Cannes critics. The festival kicked off with sci-fi violence in Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element* and wife-beating in Oldman's partly-autobiographical tale of London's East Enders.

Winterbottom's hard-hitting film of Sarajevo under occupation draws on video

footage of street massacres, assassins by young French director Mathieu Kassovitz has an ageing murderer initiate an apprentice against a backdrop of television violence.

Even Wim Wenders' *The End Of Violence*, the film screened at the festival's 50th anniversary gala before a bevy of stars, focused on violence — in the form of oppressive surveillance cameras deployed by the state.

The violence of the censor's scissors also overshadowed this year's festival. Chinese authorities prevented both Zhang Yimou and Zhang Yuan from competing for the Golden Palm.

Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami was originally told by Tehran authorities that he too would not be allowed to go to Cannes, but his film *The Taste Of The Cherry* was included at the last minute.

A Golden Palm Award automatically means huge box-office takings. The film given the festival's high-profile opening slot, Besson's spectacular, netted two million admissions within the first week of its release in France.

The two last competition entries failed to impress. Philippe Rousselot's *The Serpent's Kiss* is set in England in 1699 and follows a tangled trail of love and deception, starring Ewan McGregor, Greta Scacchi and Carmen Chaplin.

Happy Together by Hong Kong director Wong Kar Wai, inspired by the novel



British actress Carmen Chaplin (left) and Italian-born British actress Greta Scacchi (right) hug during a photo call for French-born director Philippe Rousselot's film *The Serpent's Kiss* Saturday. Rousselot's film is presented in competition for the Palme d'Or as the 50th Cannes Film Festival continues on the French Riviera (Reuters photo)

Buenos Aires Affair by Argentinian writer Manuel Puig, is about two gay men who want to renew their relationship and go to the furthest place on earth from Hong Kong, South America, to do so.

The closing film, screened out of competition, will be *Absolute Power* by Clint Eastwood, a brooding thriller focusing on a chief's confrontation with political corruption.

Eastwood plays the thief Luther, who witnesses the wife of a businessman mak-



British actress Carmen Chaplin (left) and Italian-born British actress Greta Scacchi (right) hug during a photo call for French-born director Philippe Rousselot's film *The Serpent's Kiss* Saturday. Rousselot's film is presented in competition for the Palme d'Or as the 50th Cannes Film Festival continues on the French Riviera (Reuters photo)

ing love with the president of the United States (Gene Hackman). In a bizarre sequence, the wife is killed and Luther steals the murder weapon. Corrupt secret servicemen involved in the murder give chase.

"Luther has his code and in his way he is a moral person. He has principles, which makes it difficult for him to accept what he's seen and turn his back to it," Eastwood said, echoing the theme of a hero's moral stand in his earlier films including *Unforgiven*.



1996 Miss Universe Alicia Machado of Venezuela says goodbye during the 1997 Miss Universe Pageant at the Miami Beach Convention Centre. Ms. Machado was under criticism during her reign for putting on weight (Reuters photo)

Miss USA wins Miss Universe title

MIAMI BEACH (R) — Miss USA Brook Mahealani Lee, a Hawaiian beauty of mixed heritage who says she wants to meet golf champion Tiger Woods, was crowned Miss Universe at the pageant's finale in Miami Beach Friday night.

The 26-year-old dancer and model defeated Miss Venezuela Marena Bencomo, who had enthusiastic support from the many Venezuelans in the crowd at the Miami Beach Convention Centre.

Ms. Bencomo, 23, was declared first runner-up and Miss Trinidad and Tobago, Margot Bourgeois, 24, second runner-up.

Ms. Lee declared she was shocked to win and said: "I'm going to open myself to anyone and everyone who needs me."

She told reporters after the show she believed her victory came because she spoke from her heart.

"No matter what, it pays to be true to yourself," said the raven-haired beauty, who lists alligator-wrestling among her hobbies.

A mixture of races including Korean, European and Hawaiian, she said she would like to meet Tiger Woods, the masters golf champion who is also of mixed race.

"If the world could find out what I know and what Tiger Woods knows about being mixed race, the world would be a better place," she said. "We've got a lot to talk about," she said, though admitting she had a boyfriend.

Asked in the final round of questioning by host George Hamilton what she would do if she had to follow no rules, Lee replied she would "eat everything I could."

The comment could have been unfortunate as her predecessor Alicia Machado of Venezuela nearly forfeited her title when she began to put on weight.

But Ms. Lee said later she admired Ms. Machado for the pride and dignity she had shown during the year.

The biggest shock of the evening was the failure of Miss Colombia, Claudia Elena Vasquez, to make the final 10 of the 74 contestants. She was a media favourite in a city with a large Colombian population.

Miss Panama, Miss Curacao and Miss Italy also made the last six.

Organisers estimated 2.5 billion people in about 75 countries watched the live telecast, which was hosted by Hamilton and Marla Maples-Trump, estranged wife of pageant owner Donald Trump.

Diana thanks William for charity brainwave

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana Saturday thanked her 14-year-old son William for being the inspiration behind a multi-million dollar charity sale of her dresses.

Eighty of her most famous creations are being put on sale next month in New York to raise money for AIDS and cancer research.

"The inspiration for this wonderful sale comes from just one person ... our son William," Diana said in the sale's luxury leather-bound catalogue, which went on sale for £1.250 (\$2,040).

Since her divorce from heir to the throne Prince Charles, the world's most photographed woman has sought to change her image from an elegant fashion icon to a "queen of hearts" promoting her charity work.

She said she was delighted that the sale offered a chance to raise money for British and American charities. Sales experts believe it could raise up to £4 million.

"It goes without saying that I am also delighted that these dresses which gave me so much pleasure may be enjoyed by others," she said.

The catalogue, already a collector's item through advance orders, contains portraits by Lord Snowdon of Diana wearing some of the dresses up for sale. Designer sketches are also included.

The June 25 auction at Christie's New York salesroom in Manhattan will be attended by 1,100 people who will be chosen by lottery as demand has been so great.

Banks of operators will take telephone bids. No reserves have been placed on any of the ballgowns and cocktail dresses.

"This is the world's most glamorous working wardrobe," said Christie's marketing director Meredith Etherington-Smith.

She revealed that Diana had agonised over which dresses were to go into the charity auction. "I think she found some quite tough to give away," she said.

"Members of the royal family have given dresses to their friends but they have never actually sold them before. So this is a once in a lifetime occasion," she added.

The dresses include creations by British designers Catherine Walker, Zandra Rhodes, Bruce Oldfield and Victor Edelstein and were worn by Diana between 1981 and 1996.

Most were worn on state occasions in Britain, the United States, France, India, South Korea and Thailand.

The ivory silk dress worn by the fairytale princess for her ill-fated 1981 wedding to Prince Charles is not included in the sale.

Albanian premier meets parties over poll crisis

TIRANA (R) — Albanian Prime Minister Bashkim Fino was meeting the parties of his national unity government Saturday to discuss their threat to boycott elections.

The vote is intended to prevent Albania, Europe's poorest country, from sliding back into the anarchy of February and March that followed the collapse of Pyramid investment schemes and the loss of many people's savings.

The elections were called Friday by President Sali Berisha for June 29, despite repeated threats by most parties of Mr. Fino's government to boycott the poll. Mr. Fino also met Mr. Berisha late Friday to discuss the elections.

European envoy Franz Vranitzky, leaving Albania Friday after a fifth mission in which he failed once again to solve the political crisis, had urged politicians to compromise and said the international community might withdraw assistance.

Most parties have threatened to boycott the vote, saying current electoral laws favour Mr. Berisha and his former ruling Democratic Party.

"The parties have gone to a meeting with the prime minister," said an official of the Socialist Party, of which Mr. Fino is also a member.

Mr. Fino heads a nine-party government of national reconciliation which Mr. Berisha was forced to install in March as public anger about the schemes boiled over into insurrection.

Independent newspaper Koha Jone said Mr. Fino received the backing of Mr. Vranitzky, who asked him to stay in office despite the tension created by the election wrangle.

The parties are distrustful of Mr. Berisha and the Democratic Party and say current election laws favour his party. They also want more seats decided by proportional representation while the Democrats favour a system of more majority voting.

Mr. Vranitzky seemed to have brokered a compromise Thursday by persuading parliament, dominated by the Democrats, to amend the election law.

But other parties, which insisted an electoral law presented by the government should be considered, were unhappy with the new

legislation and maintaining the boycott threat.

Mr. Vranitzky has warned that Albania is under intense international scrutiny. Unless elections were held, which had the approval of all parties then Albania risked losing international support and aid, he said.

He said the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for which he was working as a special envoy, and the Council of Europe would reconsider a commitment to monitor the elections, vital for them to be considered free and fair.

His words were echoed Friday by Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi after meeting Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima.

"I express my really deep worry," Mr. Prodi told reporters after talks with Mr. Klima.

A warning also came Friday from OSCE chairman-in-office, Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen.

"I fully support Dr. Vranitzky's position. I therefore call upon the Albanian political parties, and President (Sali) Berisha in particular, to reach agreement as a matter of urgency on the terms of an election law," Mr. Petersen added.

The European Union (EU) has said that failure to hold elections in Albania by the end of June could prompt it to reconsider its support for the Balkan state.

"Should the political stalemate not be overcome within the next days and elections not take place on June 29, the EU, in close cooperation with the international community as a whole, may be forced to reconsider its efforts of support in Albania," it said in a statement released by the Dutch government Friday evening.

The Dutch hold the EU presidency until the end of June.

It said the EU strongly supported the efforts of Mr. Vranitzky but called on Albanian political parties themselves to reach consensus on a new electoral law.

"It is up to the Albanian parties to create the right conditions for the future of their country," it said.

"Albanian political differences must be solved by Albanians and within the timeframe they have set themselves."

Hong Kong shadow legislature is pushing through rights curbs laws

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's controversial Provisional Legislature turned planned curbs on civil liberties in the territory a step closer to reality Saturday.

Bills banning donations by foreign political groups to local political parties and allowing some demonstrations to be barred on the grounds of "national security" were passed in first and second readings by the provisional legislature, local television and radio stations reported.

China, angered by democratic reforms enacted by Britain, set up the Provisional Legislature in December to replace the currently elected Legislative Council after the colony reverts to Beijing, now just 45 days away.

Hong Kong's future government wants the bill to be passed in its final reading before midnight on June 30, when the territory reverts to China after 156 years of British rule.

Though Hong Kong's future leader Tung Chee-hwa diluted his original plan to amend civil liberties laws following widespread criticism, the amended proposal continues to draw flak in Hong Kong and the United States.

"The United States has believed very strongly that the existing ordinances adequately protect human and political rights in Hong Kong," U.S. State Depart-

ment spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten also argued there was no need to change laws after the British pull out, while lawyers and pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong have blasted the plan.

The Beijing-backed legislature was also presented three bills on arrangements for the territory's Municipal and District Council after the handover.

The bills would allow Mr. Tung to appoint extra members into the fully elected municipal and district bodies.

But the meeting was marred by several of its members storming out of the conference hall over a debate on social policy.

Five members of the interim assembly walked out of the meeting after the council voted against a debate on elderly welfare which had been proposed by one of them.

The majority of the members said more urgent issues needed to be tackled before the handover than assistance to elderly.

Hong Kong's popular Democratic Party has said it would launch a legal challenge against the shadow legislature in the next two weeks, saying it is constitutionally illegal to have two such bodies legislating at the same time.

The legislature holds its meetings in China.



Russian cosmonaut Elena Kondadova offers her countryman Vasily Tsibliev a traditional gift of bread and salt as the Shuttle Atlantis astronauts and Mir cosmonauts gather in the Mir module after the two spaceships docked Friday. Kondadova had been aboard the Shuttle Atlantis. Shown are from left, top row, Charles Precourt, Tsibliev, Jerry Linenger, who had been aboard the Mir station since January, Kondadova, British/American Michael Foale, Peruvian Carlos Noriega and Edward Lu. Bottom row (L-R) cosmonaut Alexander Lazutkin, Eileen Collins and Frenchman Jean-Francois Clervoy (Reuter photo)

U.S. shuttle crew arrives at Russia's Mir

JOHNSON SPACE CENTER, Texas (R) — The crew of the space shuttle Atlantis were welcomed to the Mir space station Saturday with handshakes and hugs after the two spaceships linked up in orbit.

Atlantis docked with the sprawling Russian space complex at 10:33 p.m. EDT (0233 GMT) Friday. It was the U.S. shuttle's sixth docking with Mir.

Less than two hours later, the hatches between the two spacecraft swung open to allow the now familiar handshake between a U.S. shuttle commander and his Russian counterpart.

"It's great to have the shuttle crew aboard," said Jerry Linenger, who has been aboard the space station since January and is being relieved by British-born astronaut Michael Foale.

The shuttle astronauts offered Mir's Russian crew, Vasily Tsibliev and Alexan-

der Lazutkin, a traditional Russian welcoming gift of bread and salt, and brought Mr. Linenger the pretzels he had craved during his time in space.

"That was a perfect-looking docking," mission control's Chris Hadfield told the shuttle crew soon after the docking ports of the two spacecraft slipped together, 245 miles above the Adriatic.

"It's great to be back here on Mir, it's a beautiful sight out the window," said Atlantis Commander Charles Precourt, who flew on the first shuttle mission to Mir. The 11-year-old Russian orbital outpost will be home to Mr. Foale, a 40-year-old astrophysicist, for the next four months.

"Welcome to your doorstep of your home," Mr. Linenger told Mr. Foale over a radio link as they waved and snapped pictures of each other through the windows of their spacecraft.

Since joining the Mir crew in January, Mr. Linenger has had to contend with a string of serious mechanical breakdowns, one of which triggered a brief but serious fire.

Despite the problems, Mr. Foale, who holds dual British and U.S. citizenship, said he had no qualms about living on Mir.

He told Britain's BBC Television Friday that he was looking forward to "living calmly and easily in space," and that while there were similarities between life on Mir and his time at a strict English boarding school, "it could be a less stressful experience."

Mr. Linenger, a 42-year-old medical doctor and Navy captain, was to return to Earth aboard Atlantis on May 24. His wife, Kathryn, is expecting their second child in June.

The shuttle arrived at Mir carrying a record 1,800 kilograms of supplies and

equipment, including repair gear to patch up a leaky cooling system and an oxygen generator, called Elektron.

The bulky generator, about the size of an electric water heater, will be one of the first items moved across to Mir.

"It is the number-one transfer item," Jim Van Laak, deputy head of NASA's Shuttle-Mir Programme, said.

The Elektron was a last-minute addition to Atlantis' cargo. The Russian space authorities rushed it to the shuttle's launch site after problems with Mir's life support systems. The device uses electricity to generate breathing oxygen from waste water and will provide a crucial backup to an older, ailing system.

Mr. Foale will become the fifth NASA astronaut to live on Mir. He will be followed by two more U.S. astronauts.

Russia vows troops cut in first ever Japan visit

TOKYO (R) — Russian Defence Minister Igor Rodionov, in the first visit to Japan by a Russian defence chief, vowed Saturday to cut another 200,000 troops from the military and expand defence exchanges with Tokyo.

In a move Japanese officials said would have been unthinkable during the cold war, General Rodionov also told his Japanese counterpart Moscow does not object to the U.S.-Japan military alliance and welcomed closer military ties between Washington and Tokyo.

Gen. Rodionov arrived in Tokyo Friday and leaves Sunday after reviewing Japan's navy fleet in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo.

Russia and Japan fought two full-fledged wars this century, the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War and World War II, as well as two other undeclared wars — Japan's 1918-1922 Siberian intervention and a clash in 1939 along the border between Mongolia and Japan-held northeastern China.

The two countries have yet to sign a formal World War II peace treaty because of a thorny dispute over Russian-held islands north-east of Japan's northernmost main island Hokkaido.

The islands, called the southern Kuriles by Moscow and the northern territories by Japan, were seized by Soviet troops at the end of World War II.

In 1993, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, on a visit to Tokyo, agreed to settle the dispute through political dialogue.

Though the islands are not on the agenda during Gen. Rodionov's Tokyo tour, his visit is a sign that tensions are cooling even further over the disputed lands.

The first visit by a Japanese defence minister to Moscow occurred last year. In talks with Japanese Defence Minister Fumio Kyuma, Gen. Rodionov said his government has pledged a reduction of 200,000 troops this year across the nation.

"Since the end of the Soviet Union, we have re-

duced 1.5 million troops and we will reduce another 200,000 this year," Japanese Defence Ministry officials quoted Gen. Rodionov as telling Mr. Kyuma.

Gen. Rodionov did not elaborate but Japanese officials said they expected some of the troop reductions would be in the Far East.

Russia does not object to expanded military ties between Japan and the United States, he said. "We do not hold concerns about U.S.-Japan military alliance and understand it is not directed against any third country," the officials quoted Gen. Rodionov as telling Mr. Kyuma.

"We welcome that Japan and the United States are building even closer security ties," Gen. Rodionov said in reference to the current review of U.S.-Japan military cooperation.

The new U.S.-Japan military guideline builds on the joint declaration by President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimo-

to in April 1996 reaffirming the importance of the cold war-era, 1960 U.S.-Japan security treaty. The review is to be completed by November.

Mr. Kyuma told Gen. Rodionov that Japan will explain the contents of the new guideline to Russia as well as China and South Korea.

The two sides also agreed to start or expand on a wide variety of defence exchanges, including mutual visits by the head of the chiefs of military staff, defence researchers, military academy cadets, observers to war games, fleets and even military bands and athletes, Japanese ministry officials said.

In the first such port call to Japan since the 19th century, Russian will send a navy cruiser to Tokyo next month in response to a visit to Vladivostok by the Japanese cruiser Kurama last year, sent to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of Peter the Great's Russian Navy.

Pyongyang agrees to inter-Korean Red Cross talks

SEOUL (R) — The North Korean Red Cross Saturday accepted an offer by its Southern counterpart to reopen talks on speeding up food aid, the South Korean Red Cross said in a statement.

In a message relayed over a telephone "hotline" at the border village of Panmunjom, the North Korean Red Cross agreed to meet next Friday, but insisted on Beijing as a venue.

The Southern side had proposed Friday a gathering in either Seoul, Pyongyang or the border village of Panmunjom.

Inter-Korean Red Cross talks were held for the first time in nearly five years on May 3 and 5 in the Chinese capital. The South Korean Red Cross called for those meetings to discuss sending food directly to the North, instead of through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

It also wants to deliver aid through the land border at Panmunjom to cut transport costs and ensure that food shipments be clearly labelled as coming from the South.

But the talks bogged down after North Korea said the South must first reveal the quantity of aid to be sent before it would discuss delivery mechanisms.

In its invitation Friday, the Southern side agreed to that demand.

Saturday's statement said North Korea was now making additional requests. It had demanded to know what kind of

food aid would be sent, and the timing of the aid "so we would not have another fruitless meeting like last time."

The statement did not indicate whether the latest demands would be acceptable, although the Southern Red Cross is showing flexibility in its dealings with the North. A Red Cross official in Seoul said it would reply next week.

South Korea's Red Cross is due to deliver 3,600 tonnes of Chinese corn by train next week from China, the first batch of 15,000 tonnes donated by Southern civic groups to help stave off famine in the impoverished Stalinist nation.

The Red Cross is the only legal channel for private aid from South Korea to the North.

On Friday, the South Korean government pledged fresh food aid worth \$10 million to a U.N. appeal for North Korea.

The promise of 50,000 tonnes of corn and 300 tonnes of powdered milk is on top of \$6 million already delivered to the World Food Programme (WFP), which has appealed for 200,000 tonnes of aid worth \$98.5 million.

The United States has pledged \$25 million to the WFP to help stave off famine in the Stalinist nation.

Pyongyang has demanded massive food aid as a condition for joining proposed peace talks with the South, the United States and China. The talks are aimed at securing a lasting peace to replace a truce that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

Seoul and Washington have ruled out large-scale aid, saying this can only be discussed at peace talks.

Sri Lankan forces beat off Tamil rebel counter-attack

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan security forces beat off an overnight counter-attack by Tamil Tiger rebels to consolidate their hold on a key northern town captured from the guerrillas, military officials said Saturday.

About 100 rebels and 20 soldiers were killed in the counter-attack in the town of Ommathai, 14 kilometres north of Vavuniya, they said.

More than 100 guerrillas and 40 soldiers had been wounded, they said, adding that the rebels had used suicide cadres during the battle.

Troops were now pushing north, heading towards the heavily fortified rebel-held town of Puliyanakulam.

A military spokesman said the security forces used artillery and helicopter gunships to attack rebel reinforcements trying to stall

the army's advance.

"We have engaged the enemy with artillery and MI-24 helicopters in the area east of Ommathai," he told Reuters. "About 300 terrorists were in the area and they have suffered heavy casualties."

Rebel mortar positions used to harass troops were engaged by artillery fire, he added. A rebel tractor-trailer carrying more than 20 rebels, including two area leaders, was destroyed in Friday's fighting, military officials said.

The army so far has lost more than 40 soldiers while hospital officials said some 320 soldiers wounded in the past two days of fighting had been sent to hospitals in northern Anuradhapura and Jaffna and in the capital Colombo.

A spokesman for the

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels was not immediately available for comment.

Government officials in the area have made urgent requests to the government to provide food supplies to feed thousands of people displaced by the fighting, aid workers said.

Troops based in Vavuniya, 220 kilometres north of the capital Colombo, launched the offensive code-named "Jaya Sikuru," or "Sure Of Victory," Tuesday.

The LTTE's clandestine Voice of Tigers radio, monitored by Reuters, said Saturday 24 fighters had been killed in the first three days of fighting.

The Defence Ministry has said that up to Friday 27 soldiers had been killed and 31 wounded in the fighting.

It has also said that troops monitoring LTTE transmis-

sions confirmed that at least 100 rebels had been killed or wounded in the battle for Ommathai alone.

The Defence Ministry says the main aim of the drive was to capture areas in the shrub-covered Wanni region from the LTTE, who are waging a war for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in predominantly Sinhalese Sri Lanka's north and east.

Analysts said the offensive aims to open a land supply route linking Vavuniya with Jaffna peninsula, about 100 kilometres further north.

The military has been tight-lipped about where the troops are heading.

The government says more than 30,000 people have died in the war, now in its 14th year. The LTTE says the toll is higher.

S. Korean president apologises as son faces arrest

SEOUL (R) — A South Korean court issued an arrest warrant Saturday for President Kim Young-Sam's son on charges of taking bribes worth millions of dollars and evading taxes.

Minutes later, the president issued a public apology and vowed "stern punishment" for anyone found guilty of corruption, regardless of rank.

State prosecutors had sought the arrest of the junior Kim for taking kickbacks of 3.2 billion won (\$3.6 million) in return for business favours to alumni of his old high school.

He has denied accepting bribes. Kim Hyun-Chul, dubbed the "crown prince" by the media, is also accused of evading taxes on 3.3 billion won given to him by businessmen, but not as bribes, a prosecution official said.

An arrest would bring to a climax a corruption scandal involving top politicians, bankers and businessmen that emerged from the rubble of the country's biggest bankruptcy in January.

If convicted of bribery, Kim Hyun-Chul, the president's second son, faces a maximum sentence of five years in jail.

President Kim, who came to power on an anti-graft ticket, has been severely wounded by the scandal stemming from the collapse of Hanbo Steel Co. under five trillion won of debts acquired by string-pulling in high places.

"President Kim again expressed regrets that the public has been given such a severe shock and disappointment through this incident," a presidential Blue House statement said.

"This reflects President Kim's firm intention that there should be no sanctuary when it comes to punishing corruption," it added. "From now on, President Kim will sternly punish, according to the law and regardless of status or social rank, those linked to corruption."

Kim Hyun-Chul would be the first child of a serving South Korean head of state to be jailed. He was summoned by state prosecutors for questioning Thursday and has been at the supreme public prosecutors' office ever since.

The charges do not relate directly to Hanbo's failure, which sparked a wide-ranging prosecution graft inquiry that eventually snared the president's son.

Prosecutors had been trying to dig up evidence that Mr. Kim Hyun-Chul used his influence to obtain lucrative broadcasting, cable television and telecommunications licences for his associates.

Sinn Fein accepts U.K. offer of talks

BELFAST (R) — The president of the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) political wing Saturday accepted an offer of preliminary peace talks from Britain's new government but ruled out negotiations on a new IRA truce.

The IRA has been waging guerrilla war for 28 years to end British rule in Northern Ireland and reunite it with the Roman Catholic Irish republic. Northern Ireland's Protestant majority wants continued links with Britain.

Gerry Adams, president of the IRA's political arm Sinn Fein, said it had contacted the British government to arrange a meeting. "It should be done without delay," Mr. Adams said.

He was reacting to an initiative by Britain's new Labour prime minister, Tony Blair, to soften a ban on official contact with Sinn Fein. Mr. Blair said his officials would meet the party without seeking an IRA truce first.

Mr. Adams' statement gave no clue as to when the talks between Sinn Fein and British government officials might take place.

Sinn Fein said Mr. Adams and his chief lieutenant, Martin McGuinness, would travel to London Monday. They won seats in Britain's May 1 elections but have refused to take them because it would entail allegiance to Britain.

Mr. Adams said he would

be talking to British officials on the basis of Sinn Fein's electoral mandate.

The party polled some 16 per cent of votes in the Catholic Irish nationalist community in Northern Ireland.

But he ruled out any negotiation of a new IRA ceasefire. The previous truce was scrapped in February 1996 and an IRA campaign of guerrilla violence resumed.

"I have always refused to engage in any speculation about the IRA because Sinn Fein is not the IRA and we have neither the responsibility or authority or ability to negotiate a ceasefire," Mr. Adams said.

Mr. Blair's initiative opened the door to talks which both Mr. Adams and Mr. McGuinness have called for since last year without demanding a prior IRA ceasefire.

The IRA has not carried out any attacks since a sniper fired a bullet through the back of a policeman in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, last month. She was badly wounded but is recovering.

Britain, Ireland and the United States say that the IRA must call a new, lasting truce to secure a seat for Sinn Fein at multi-party peace talks, from which it is currently banned because of IRA violence.

Mr. McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, said the preliminary talks with the British government

would determine whether the Belfast peace negotiations were "credible."

"What we have to do is establish in those discussions with British government representatives whether or not we are going to have on offer a real, and meaningful and credible process of peace negotiations," he told the BBC.

"And if we can establish that, then we might have a case to put that persuasively to the IRA," he added.

Mr. Adams said the Irish government which comes to power after June 6 elections should also recognise Sinn Fein's electoral mandate in the light of the Blair offer.

Sinn Fein looks to Dublin for support. Ireland's constitution lays claim to Northern Ireland although successive governments have sought a negotiated settlement satisfying both pro-British Protestants and Irish Catholic nationalists.

Sinn Fein says it wants the Belfast talks, which group pro-British Unionists and the SDLP Irish Nationalist Party, to have a set time frame and negotiate "core issues" including the withdrawal of Britain's 18,000 troops from the province.

It fears that the talks will strengthen the hand of Unionists, who want the province to stay British, and block the way to the united Ireland that Irish nationalists seek.

Croatia's Granic rebuts U.S. criticism

WASHINGTON (R) — Senior Croatian officials, smarting from strong U.S. criticism, has insisted Zagreb will meet Dayton Peace Accord requirements concerning Serbs and war criminals but said they needed \$500 million to do so.

Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic challenged the U.S. State Department's description of his meeting with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Thursday and said the two agreed on "more than 90 per cent" of the issues they discussed.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Ms. Albright scolded Mr. Granic in a 50-minute meeting Thursday over Croatia's treatment of Serbs and other peace accord violations.

It was the clearest public signal yet of increased U.S. frustration with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, whose tone has turned increasingly nationalistic and whose ties with American diplomats have deteriorated.

The secretary's complaints included specific incidents of Croatian mob violence against minority Serbs in Eastern Slavonia and of Croatia's refusal to allow Serbs to return to their homes in the Krajina region of the country, Mr. Burns said.

Croatian officials have often asserted a commitment to the 1995 U.S.-mediated Dayton Peace Accords which ended the war in Bosnia, but failed to fol-

low up. Ms. Albright was not satisfied with Mr. Granic's responses, Mr. Burns said.

Mr. Granic said Mr. Burns' statement "doesn't fully reflect the discussion" with Ms. Albright and insisted: "We were in agreement on more than 90 per cent of these issues."

"Our strategic aim is really to return all the people from Eastern Slavonia who want to return on a voluntary basis," Mr. Granic told a news conference.

Zagreb plans to "work very hard to return these people ... protect the people and to give full guarantees for protection of minority rights and human rights," he said.

As for the Bosnia war crimes tribunal in the Hague, Mr. Granic said: "Croatia is ready to fully cooperate."

Mr. Granic said Ms. Albright provided "new information about the problems of refugees (and) cooperation with the Hague tribunal" on Bosnia war crimes and "we gave really many answers on all these issues in detail."

Washington has long demanded that Croatia send indicted war criminals to the Hague for prosecution. Ms. Albright reported that Dario Kordic, a Bosnian Croat leader charged with murdering hundreds of Muslims in 1993, was in Croatia but Mr. Granic said he did not believe that was so.

The Eastern Slavonia

enclave of Croatia, a once-volatile region dominated by Serbs and bordering the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia, is now administered by the United Nations under a mandate expiring on July 15. It will then become part of Croatia proper and revert to Zagreb's control.

Serbs and human rights monitors have reported that Bosnian Croat refugees expelled and abused elderly Serbians in central Croatia, threatening them with bombs and smashing windows. Key to the Dayton Accords is that displaced people should be able to return home.

Mr. Granic said that in 1991-1995 when Serbs occupied one-third of Croatia, thousands of Croats were killed or expelled from their homes and that as a result, hostile feelings linger.

Integration was going "very well" and "our government is ready to take full control ... investigate all the incidents and prevent the incidents" between Serbs and Croats, he said.

But Jure Radic, development and reconstruction minister, said Croatia needs \$1 billion over two years to build houses so refugees and the displaced can be resettled. Half of that would come from Croatia's budget and the rest was being sought from the world community, he said.

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Slanted ceiling

THE AMENDMENTS to the Press and Publications Law, announced by the government yesterday, make a mockery of the concept of freedom of expression and constitute a setback to the aspirations of the country's leadership as well as those of the emerging civil society organisations.

Not only will these draconian measures ensure the immediate disappearance of the lively tabloid press, they heavily burden the mainstream and responsible press by barring it from reporting, commenting or analysing a host of issues which are at the heart of democracy. While we strongly agree that any news, views or opinions which disparage His Majesty the King, the Royal family or the security forces, should be banned, we do not agree with the government on most of the provisions of Article 40 of the law.

To censor newspapers for reporting, analysing or commenting on "government documents of a confidential nature," without defining that which is considered confidential, is to allocate authority to the government to describe all of its dealings as confidential and therefore protected from the watchful eye of the press, leading, in the process, to corruption.

The least that can be said about Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi's statement yesterday, that the new law "raises the ceiling of freedom, and the ceiling of responsibility," is that it is an insult to the intelligence of those who are meant to hear or read it. Dr. Mutawi cited the abolishing of a 4-6-month imprisonment term of any journalist receiving outside favours as meant to "raise the ceiling of freedom." Former prime ministers are on the record as admitting that they were unable to bring journalists, on the payroll of foreign governments, to justice as it was proved very difficult to provide material evidence against them in a court of law. We therefore ask the minister exactly what ceiling of freedom his government is raising when it lifted this provision.

As for responsible journalism, we agree with the minister and the government that many of the tabloid newspapers have frequently trespassed freedom of expression, credibility and responsible journalism. Nevertheless, and despite the proliferation of tabloid newspapers, we fail to see that they were responsible for any one act of violence. Admittedly, at least one of them incited violence against foreigners, a very repugnant act, which must be emphatically condemned. But does driving them completely out of the market serve any positive purpose? We think not. We think that, in spite of their crude tendencies, they have provided an alternative to the mainstream press which so far has not assumed its role as watchdog on behalf of the people over official business.

Whether this law will help in ushering in a stronger or weaker 13th Parliament, remains to be seen. However, we remain hopeful that the democracy and freedom that His Majesty the King introduced, nurtured and continues to promote will triumph over tabloid excesses and government fears.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily said Saturday that U.S. envoy Dennis Ross' failure, during his latest mission, to end the deadlock in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations was due to the failure of the U.S. administration to adopting a clear stance and a firm and unbiased attitude. The paper said Mr. Ross' mission was bound to end in failure because the U.S. administration has been reluctant to force the Israelis to abide by the peace accords between Israel and the Palestinians and because Washington has condoned Israel's move to build a settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim, in Arab East Jerusalem. The U.S. envoy should not have been entrusted with a mission similar to that of a postman, carrying messages between the two sides, he should have been empowered to force the party that violates the accord to comply with the requirements of peace, said the daily. Mr. Ross is not to blame since he has been implementing the directives of the U.S. administration which has not been a fair broker in the peace mediation efforts, the paper added. Mr. Ross' failure, said the paper, should prompt Washington to re-examine its position and adopt a fairer stand if it wants to pursue the role of peace mediator.

A WRITER for Al Dustour called for an Egyptian-Iranian-Syrian alliance to counter the emerging power of the Turkish-Israeli alliance which is clearly directed against the Arab Nation's interests. Yasser Zaareh said that the Arab alliance should enlist the backing of Russia and China in warding off the Israeli-Turkish threat and must seek help from the European Union to have more say in the Middle East affairs rather than leave the arena for the Americans. The writer said the Turkish-Israeli alliance seeks to force Syria to stop demanding the return of its occupied territories and to curtail the rising power of Iran, a project that is being implemented with Washington's backing and blessings. The Turkish premier should not appear to be part of this conspiracy and should give up the present Turkish government coalition and so stop the deterioration in his Islamic party's credibility, demanded the writer. He said that by being in the opposition ranks, the Islamists would be in a stronger position to counter the army's moves and its alliance with the Jewish state.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

A budget set-back is in the making

By Dr. Fahed Faneek

ONE OF the most important objectives of the economic adjustment programme, agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is to gradually reduce the deficit of the budget, before foreign grants, in an effort to reach a state of financial self-sufficiency which will give independence its real meaning.

It goes without saying that the state whose budget depends on the pleasure and largesse of other states is not actually independent. It finds itself obliged to appease this or that power and yield to external pressures and arm twisting.

The programme went well and achieved its set targets. The fiscal deficit declined rapidly from 17 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1991 to 4.6 per cent in 1996. The deficit is planned to further decline to 3.1 per cent, only in the current year, so the target of self-sufficiency seems just around the corner.

However, the first months of 1997 carried bad news and indicated a set-back in the fiscal track. Domestic revenue during the first four months of this year reflected a decline of between 10 to 15 per cent in comparison to budget estimates or to the actual revenue of last year's corresponding months. This is obviously a negative signal of a new trend

that should not be allowed to continue.

The reason behind this decline of revenue is perhaps the economic slowdown, beyond expectations, as evidenced by several aggregate indicators such as imports, exports, industrial output, tourism, transportation, declared profits of shareholding companies and the volume of newly registered companies.

If the present state of affairs continues throughout the whole year, the deficit of the budget before grants will worsen, which will be considered a major setback for the fiscal policy and the economic adjustment programme on which big hopes are pinned. It may also mean that the painful sacrifices which the average Jordanian citizen was required to make by reducing his already hard-pressed standard of living are no more met by real progress towards the final objectives.

There is no reason to believe that there is some ease in the collection of treasury dues from the public. Had this been the case, we would have looked into some measures to be taken by the Ministry of Finance and its subdivisions, such as Customs, Income Tax, Land and Survey departments. The problem lies with a general economic shrinkage. It is only natural under the circumstances to look into

the strict monetary policy adopted by the Central Bank. The question is whether the CBJ went too far with its measures, so much so that bank credit all but dried out and the bulk of the liquidity was drained by the extensive issuance of high interest certificates of deposit (CDs), bringing the liquidity in the market to below the adequate level.

The Central Bank has of course its legitimate reasons to do everything it can to protect the dinar exchange rate and build up its own net reserves of foreign exchange. These objectives are not only important to the Central Bank, they are also crucial to the entire national economy. But the questions persist: To what extent can the Central Bank go with its present very strict monetary policy, what are other measures that can revitalise the economy without jeopardising monetary stability and, finally, does the fiscal policy have viable alternatives to face the decline in domestic revenues other than the freezing of capital expenditure?

In order for the Jordanian economy to make a substantial recovery, it needs an external engine, in the form of capital flow, as Arab or foreign grants, more remittances from expatriates and higher volume of exports of goods and services. We should extend our vision regionally and globally. There are no more purely domestic solutions.

'Washington's policy on oil from Iraq, Iran and Libya could lead to tremendous economic upheavals'

By Dr. Mamdouh G. Salameh

AS WE approach the 21st century, two major intractable, but nevertheless inseparable, factors will most decisively impact on the price of crude oil and determine how high the price could go in the coming years. The two factors are the global oil demand and the production capacity, both of which are entangled with the geopolitics of oil in the Middle East.

Restrictions imposed by the United States on the oil trade of some Middle Eastern states could have dire consequences for the world oil market. With the capacity of Iraq, Iran and Libya put out of reach by the aggressive U.S. policies, the \$40 oil barrel could be a reality by 2005.

The U.S. containment policy of the free oil-producing countries is not conducive to the future stability of oil prices — a matter of paramount importance to the global economy.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA), notoriously cautious in projecting global oil demand, sees demand in 1997 growing by at least 2.6 per cent, to 71 million barrels per day (bpd), or 2m bpd higher than 1996. And should current trends hold the world's dependence on Arab Gulf oil will increase, with Gulf producers accounting for a projected 40 per cent of the global oil needs in 2000 and 48 per cent in 2010.

At the rate oil demand is growing these days and despite robust growth in non-Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) output, it is highly likely that by 2005 — only eight years away — 10m bpd of additional oil will be needed from OPEC. As things stand presently, OPEC will be able to cope with this extra demand for its oil, but it

needs Iraq to be producing to its considerable potential by then.

Putting it differently, if the world is not able to count on 6.5m bpd of extra Iraqi, Iranian and Libyan oil capacity — that is, capacity of the three states bearing the brunt of the U.S. containment policy — there is bound to be strong upwards pressure on oil prices. Iraq's oil potential is second only to Saudi Arabia's, so it comes as no surprise to find that Iraq alone accounts for almost half of the additional 11.5m bpd of the capacity OPEC is expected to install by 2005. What happens to Iraq is, therefore, of critical importance to the stability of oil prices.

U.S. containment policy of Iraq, Iran and Libya

The cornerstone of the current U.S. policy towards the Middle East is the dual containment of Iraq and Iran — countries the United States considers a threat to the Gulf region. There is a growing international suspicion that even if Iraq complies with all the relevant U.N. resolutions, there is no chance the Iraqi oil will flow freely again if the United States has anything to do with it, as long as President Saddam Hussein remains in power.

This is worrying as far as the oil market is concerned, for it is known that the Iraqi oil industry needs time and investment funds for rehabilitation. The longer Iraq is denied access to top investment funds for maintenance and capacity expansion, the greater the possibility of higher oil prices.

Therefore, what is needed is a novel, imaginative international community approach to the Iraqi question. Limited oil sales are fine for the time being, but they do not help solve the

world's longer-term needs for oil. The world needs Iraq's oil and will be prepared to pay for it. The real problem is how to satisfy this demand for Iraqi oil without Iraq using the revenues for rearming.

Iran is obviously not as significant as Iraq in terms of the geopolitics of oil. It remains, nevertheless, a populous Gulf state with abundant oil and gas resources that need to be exploited for the benefit of the country and the world at large. The additional 0.5m bpd of oil capacity that Iran plans to have by 2005 would certainly help satisfy the world's growing demand for oil.

As in Iraq's case, investment is needed to bring this capacity on stream and the requisite funds are most likely to come from abroad. However, in Iran's case, there are no U.N. sanctions to contend with, so in principle, there is no reason why Iran should not fulfil its potential — except that, if the U.S. does not impose total trade embargo against it.

The main objectives of the U.S. dual-containment policy are to prevent Iran from becoming the dominant power in the region and from continuing to give support to international terrorism. Rational as these objectives may be from the U.S. point of view, they are being achieved in a way that has created difficulties for the U.S. and its allies. D'Amato's (U.S. senator) bill prohibits those foreign companies investing more than \$40 million in Iran from doing business in the United States as well.

Companies are in effect obliged to choose between Iran and the United States, which is neither fair nor necessarily desirable from a commercial point of view. As it happens, many U.S. companies are not too happy either with a policy that

restricts their freedom to invest where they see fit. The international oil industry is thus prevented from bringing low-cost supplies on stream for political reasons.

Libya too has fallen foul of the United States as another country suspected of promoting international terrorism and has, therefore, felt the long retributive arm of the U.S. policy. Like Iraq, Libya is subject to a U.S.-inspired U.N. embargo that has restricted the ability of the country to expand its oil production and thus its oil exports.

Libya's proven oil reserves are 30 billion barrels (bb), seven times those of the United Kingdom, yet Libya only produces half as much oil as the U.K. Furthermore, Libyan oil is but a short tanker-trip away from southern Europe. For some time now, the United States has wanted to tighten the screws on Libya further, but Italy, France and Germany have opposed any policy that might deny them additional short-haul oil supplies in the future.

Mutual interests for the U.S. and Saudi Arabia

This policy of containment has already had a big impact on the oil industry. The world's dependence on oil from just a few oil-producing countries has increased beyond what might be considered reasonable. In 1996, Saudi Arabia oil exports amounted to 44 per cent of the Middle East's oil exports and a staggering 20 per cent of all the oil traded in the world, and there is little reason to suspect that this dependence on one country is going to change in the foreseeable future. More significantly than this is Saudi Arabia's 60 per cent share of the world's current spare oil production capacity. This share could even exceed 65

per cent if Iran's actual spare capacity is less than assumed.

Last year, the world needed more oil from OPEC, its residual supplier, but this was not forthcoming because Saudi Arabia, with almost two-thirds of the global spare capacity — decided not to increase production. As a result, oil prices rose in 1996 by around \$8 a barrel from low to high point, to yield a 44 per cent increase.

What is more, the situation will hardly improve in the years to come if Iraq remains constrained to the foreseeable future and the Iranian and Libyan oil industries are prevented from expanding as intended.

Indeed, as a result of the containment of the three countries, oil demand may edge very near to supply capacity, causing the price of oil to exceed the \$40 barrel mark by 2005 and imposing additional costs on the consumers, amounting to trillions of dollars over the period 1997-2005.

Yet, the U.S. policy that has caused the world's growing dependence on Saudi Arabia, in particular, is not without its benefits for the U.S. economy. A few examples will suffice to convey the flavour of what has been termed the "mutuality of interest between Saudi Arabia and the United States".

In 1994, two U.S. companies — Boeing and McDonnell Douglas — won an order worth \$6 billion to supply 60 civilian airliners to Saudi Arabia's national airline. In the same year, American Telephone and Telegraph was awarded a \$4-billion contract to expand and update the telecommunications network of the kingdom, while on the horizon looms a fighter-plane deal with the U.S., involving F-16s said to be worth a massive \$15 billion. This is all well and good for the U.S. economy in the short-term,

but what about the world's longer-term well-being?

So we are faced with the prospect of the world's only superpower pursuing policies that will surely increase considerably the world's dependence on a few producers for extra oil supplies and, at the same time, cause the price of oil to be higher than would have been the case otherwise.

The belligerent U.S. stance towards Iraq, Iran and Libya, when admixed with the U.S. reluctance to press on with the Middle East peace process out of consideration for Israel sensitivities, is playing into the hands of extremists everywhere in the region.

Therefore, unless the United States helps speed up the Middle East peace process, unless the U.S. guides the U.N. towards a novel way of dealing with Iraq that does not damage its prospects of pumping large quantities of oil in the future, and unless the U.S. desists from using aggressive economic weapons against countries like Iran and Libya, there is little hope of oil price stability and much fear of tremendous economic upheavals ahead, with the \$40 oil barrel becoming a reality by 2005.

However, countries have neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies — only permanent interests.

Dr. Mamdouh G. Salameh, born in Irbid and currently living and working in the United Kingdom, is an international oil economist, a consultant to the World Bank in Washington D.C. and a technical expert of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) in Vienna. He is also a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Xinjiang — China's 'other Tibet'

By Gwynne Dyer

"WE THINK Deng's death will bring a power struggle within the Chinese elite," said Sargari Tarmyn, spokesman for the Uighur independence movement in Moscow, late February.

"If that happens, the independence movement in Turkestan will intensify." In fact, it is already pretty intense.

Given the tightness of Chinese border controls and internal censorship, news out of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (the Muslim-populated far north-west of China, also known as Sinkiang or Turkestan) is always late and unreliable. But if the leaders of the independence movement are right, then on March 20, the Chinese publicly executed two young Uighur men implicated in the January riots — which may well set off the next round of violence.

It was the public execution of some 30 Uighur nationalists that sparked the riots in Yining in January. Chinese settlers were killed and their bodies burned; many Uighurs were killed by Chinese troops, China

says 10 were killed and 100 injured; the leaders of the United National Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan claim that 25 Uighurs and 55 Chinese soldiers died.

It has been five years since some Uighur separatist groups adopted a violent strategy, but it is only in the past two months that the violence has become too obvious for the Chinese to hide. The riots in Yining were followed later last month by three bombs on buses in Urumqi, the regional capital, that killed seven and injured 60, and then early this month by a bus bomb in Beijing itself.

The bombs in Urumqi were timed to coincide with the memorial service for China's long-serving "paramount leader", Deng Xiaoping, but the event that really unleashed Uighur nationalism lies further in the past. It was the collapse of the old Soviet Union that gave the Uighurs first hope, and then arms as well.

Once the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia torn apart two continents. At various times their horse-mounted hordes conquered all of China, much of Europe, half of India,

By the 14th century they had all converted to Islam, and cities like Tashkent, Samarkand and Kashgar became centres of great wealth and learning. The last two centuries, however, have not been kind to them.

Between the mid-1700s and the mid-1800s, Russian and Chinese imperialists gradually conquered and annexed the entire region, bringing all the peoples of Central Asia — Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Uighur — under their rule. But in 1991, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, everybody got their freedom again. Everybody except the Uighurs, who are ruled by China.

The Uighurs briefly won independence in 1944 as the "Republic of East Turkestan", but when the Chinese civil war ended in 1949 their masters regained control. The Uighur leaders were summoned to Beijing — and their plane mysteriously crashed on the flight back, leaving the leaderless republic easy pickings for Chinese troops.

Since 1949 the Uighurs of Xinjiang have had a lower profile than China's other colonial

possession, Tibet, even though they vastly outnumber the 2 million Tibetans. Tibet has a long border with India; Xinjiang was lost in the dead centre of Asia, completely surrounded by other territories under totalitarian rule.

The year 1991 did not bring independence to the Uighurs, but it did bring a great change. Since then, Xinjiang has shared a porous 1,500-km border with the newly independent countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where both Islam and nationalism are honoured, not repressed. Inevitably, ideas and arms have crossed that border. More importantly, hope has crossed it.

The Uighurs, like the Tibetans, are facing demographic marginalisation. China's strategy for nailing down its western territories is to flood them with settlers from the majority (Han) ethnic group until the local people, together with their languages, religions, and traditions, are just overwhelmed. These will become Chinese lands, with a few picturesque natives selling curios. In 1950, just after the second

Chinese conquest, there were only 200,000 Han Chinese in all Xinjiang. There are now 6 million, and hundreds more arrive every day, drawn by housing and job incentives that in practice are only available to ethnic Chinese. Urumqi is now a Chinese-majority city, and in Xinjiang as a whole the Han immigrants may now equal the Uighurs in numbers.

At the last census the Uighurs were still close to half of Xinjiang's 16 million people (and there are also about a million Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in the region), but every train arriving in Urumchi erodes their position a little further.

The immigrants are not villains. They are just another sort of victims, sent to a distant, arid, hostile region by the policies of a government in which they have no say. And if Turkestan manages to snatch its independence in the next few years, while the power-brokers in Beijing are busy with the succession struggle, they will become victims twice over.

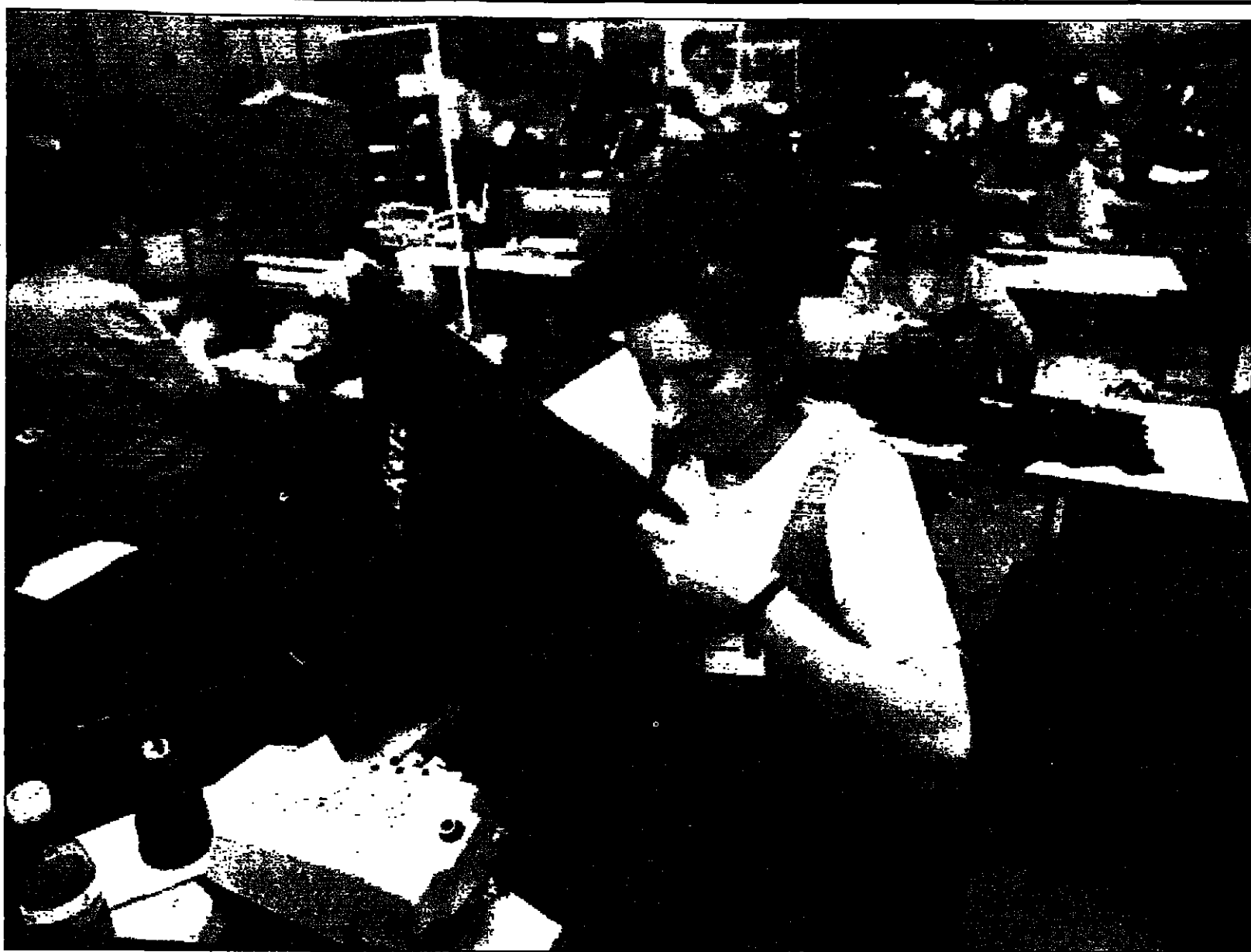
It may get very rough in Xinjiang. The Uighurs are outnumbered and outnumbered by

the Chinese, but they do have an identity rooted in shared language, religion, history and homeland — which is more than you can say for the average bewildered Chinese immigrant.

At the least, there could be great violence and misery. At best, the Uighurs could actually win back their independence. But they can only do that if the Chinese become so transfixed by the succession struggle in Beijing, so caught up in the debate about democratisation, that they are willing to let their colonies go.

That is what happened in the old Soviet Union, but there is a big difference. Only 50 per cent of Soviet citizens were actually Russians; over 90 per cent of China's citizens are Han Chinese. To democratised Russia had to decolonise, China does not.

If the Uighurs do not win independence in the next decade, they will probably end up like the native peoples of North and South America: marginalised and despised in the lands they once owned. But at least for the Uighurs, the game is not over yet.



Portuguese women work on shirts at the Eurofil clothing factory in Maia. Small textile, clothing and shoe manufacturers which earlier this decade employed more than half the region's workforce, face a mounting threat from cheaper goods from Asia and parts of Africa flooding into Europe under international accords freeing up the flow of world commerce (Reuter photo)

Portugal readies for new trade world

By Richard Waddington
Reuter

OPORTO, Portugal — Northern Portugal, the country's economic base, is feeling the unaccustomed chill of unemployment as traditional businesses battle to survive in an increasingly competitive trading world.

While national economic debate focuses on whether Portugal will make the starting grid for Europe's single currency, businessmen and economists say that it is rapid moves to global free trade that are posing the greatest challenge.

Small textile, clothing and shoe manufacturers, which earlier this decade employed more than half the region's workforce, face a mounting threat from cheaper goods from Asia and parts of Africa flooding into Europe under international accords freeing up the flow of world commerce.

"The great challenge to Portugal is not the single currency but trade. We have still not totally adapted to liberalisation," said economist Manuel Martins of the Oporto Industrial Association (AIP).

"We cannot continue to

produce the same sort of products that the Far East produces more cheaply than we do," he added.

Portugal, still one of the European Union's poorest members despite making economic strides since joining the bloc a decade ago, could once rely on the relative cheapness of its labour and import barriers to nurture industries ranging from textiles to tinned foods.

Now with barriers disappearing and price gradually ceasing to be an advantage, industries will survive only if they can compete with Europe's best in terms of quality, speed of delivery and flexibility, businessmen say.

But while confident that the transformation will be achieved, the cost in the short-run in terms of unemployment could be high, they say.

"We have no tradition of this (high unemployment). Above all in Oporto, where the level of unemployment is one of the highest in Portugal — 11.4 per cent," said Mayor Fernando Gomes.

The rate compares with around seven per cent nationwide and could even underestimate the problem because many of those

who lose their jobs in industry return to the land to subsistence farms and disappear from the statistics, economists say.

"There are companies which already know how to deal with the global market. But there are others which are still inward looking, too preoccupied with the internal market," said Henry Tillo, president of the Portuguese Textile and Clothing Association.

"But it is our conviction that within two or three years — by the millennium — the worst will be over," he added.

This assumes, however, that European Union Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan is thwarted in his desire to speed up the dismantling of remaining barriers to trade in textiles which are not due to come down fully until 2004.

Portugal will certainly fight any such attempt, industrialists said.

"If it (the existing framework) is respected then we are not afraid... (But) I think that Brittan is trying to liberalise too much," said Mr. Tillo.

While Portugal's clothing industry may not yet be causing Italy's doyens of design any sleepless nights, there are no doubts

that the business is on the right track, economists say.

"Fifteen years ago, most of our clothing production was designed abroad, made at the orders of international clients. But now we are increasingly doing the designing ourselves," said the AIP's Martins.

For the past couple of years, for example, Oporto has been the setting for fashion shows, drawing top models such as Claudia Schiffer.

Rising living standards are slowly narrowing the wages gap with the rest of Europe, so lifting production costs, but Portugal still enjoys an important geographic advantage over Far Eastern competitors.

In a business world increasingly demanding flexibility and fast delivery, Portugal's closeness to its main customers in northern Europe remains an important weapon in the battle for markets, industrialists said.

In one area of the clothing business, the Portuguese can already point to notable success, with its shoe industry mounting a challenge to Italy's European dominance in quality if not in quantity, industry leaders say.

Portugal's footwear

industry is worth more than \$2 billion a year with over 80 per cent of its output going to export.

But when it comes to competing with the Italians, the country still has a serious obstacle to overcome — its image, industrialists say.

"Portugal's image is one of a peripheral, poor country, while a consumer only has to see an Italian type name to think of quality. That is our biggest problem," said Manuel Carlos, president of the Portuguese Shoe Association.

When European Union leaders meet early next year to decide which countries have passed the economic and monetary union — the single currency — Portugal's shoe manufacturers will be praying Italy ranks amongst them.

Their businesses were nearly ruined in the early 1990s when a massive devaluation of the lira left Portugal unable to match the Italians even in price.

"It is our feeling that Italy cannot remain outside... And if it did, there would have to be an accord on devaluations," said Mr. Carlos.

Fight for rights as children suffer in power drive

By Vilma Wimaladasa

COLOMBO — Three-month-old baby Harendra has trouble sleeping. Night after night, he wakes in fright, but his cries are drowned by the thundering 12.2-megawatt diesel-powered generating plant only metres from his home.

His parents are seriously concerned about the installation's long-term effects on the health of little Harendra and his sister, aged seven.

A neighbour's 11-month-old daughter Dilakshi was born with heart and kidney defects. A doctor has advised the family to move because the constant racket is causing stress while fumes from the eight big generators appear to be affecting the child's breathing.

"But where can we go?" asks Dilakshi's mother. "We're already poor and houses don't come cheaply."

Up to 150 families in the Enul Kotte suburb of Colombo suffer in some way because of the power plant. Some complain of developing hearing problems, while many in the neighbourhood report frequent headaches.

They also fear for their sanity — let alone quality of life — which, they say, is being sacrificed in Sri Lanka's thirst for electricity. President Chandrika Kumaratunga has passed emergency regulations on power generation — overriding legal safeguards that would have protected them.

Now a group of residents are taking a test case to the Supreme Court.

Five children, aged between two months and two years and represented by their parents, claim their constitutional rights to life, to an environment adequate for health and well-being and to freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment have been violated.

The petition went before the court in late April. A ruling may take months.

"We're going to fight this," says Hemantha Wijetunga of the Environmental Foundation, a Sri Lankan non-government organisation that filed the petition. "Over

the past five years we have taken legal action in more than 50 cases... of a similar nature and won every one."

The trouble began several months ago following a severe drought last year that badly hit the island's generating capacity. Sri Lanka relies heavily on hydroelectric power. Some industries closed or had to reduce production and a number of diesel generators were installed. Late rains this year have caused fresh problems.

"The worst is that we do not get sleep," said one. "Our medical bills — for us and the children — have risen and many of us have gone into debt to pay."

The power plant in question was built by a private company under an agreement with the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB).

It was investigated by the Central Environmental Authority, which found noise emissions ranged between 70 and 100 decibels — levels well in excess of the authority's maximum limit for such a mainly residential area of 60 decibels by day and 50 by night.

However, in January the president suspended sections of environment, urban development and public nuisance laws relating to power generation.

In their petition, the children are asking the Supreme Court to declare this ruling invalid.

Residents say that before the plant was built, the only CEB presence was a sub-station which

operated silently.

They say they now exist in a living hell, with excessive noise and fumes around the clock.

"The worst is that we do not get sleep," said one. "Our medical bills — for us and the children — have risen and many of us have gone into debt to pay."

The din affects the studies of older children, while dust from the plant falls on clothes, food and the household environment. Heat from the generators has increased the temperature of the immediate area.

And because the petitioners are very young children whose bodies, minds and sensory organs are still developing, these conditions are said to pose a threat to their physical and mental well-being in later life.

Environmental groups have also protested about the president's emergency regulations. They say the real beneficiaries are private companies selling electricity to the national grid.

Critics fear the regulations will be cited by firms wanting to proceed with a big hydroelectric project in the central hills that was initially blocked by the authorities amid concerns over its environmental impact and the fact that it would dry up several scenic waterfalls. Devon Falls (97 metres), St. Clair Major (87 metres) and St. Clair Minor (57 metres) would be among those affected. As well as robbing Sri Lankans of their beauty spots, the falls' loss could hit foreign tourism, which is an important money-earner.

There is also concern over a government decision to end the ban on air conditioners from taking power from the national grid. When read together with suspension of the environmental protection and public nuisance laws, this gives an affluent few the right to make others suffer as they enjoy the comfort of air conditioning in their homes and offices.

Gemini News Service

Britain's imperial Cinderella is Hong Kong handover example

By Mure Dickie
Reuter

WEIHAI, China — Years of Sino-British disputes may have marred the run-up to Hong Kong's return to China, but if history is any guide, then bygone bickering need not prevent an amicable handover at midnight on June 30.

The trail from British treaty territory back to Chinese sovereignty was blazed 67 years ago by another deep-water port wrested by London's 19th century imperial might from a decaying Qing dynasty.

The area around the eastern town of Weihai reverted to China on October 1, 1930, after a handover with enough pomp and ceremony to gratify both Chinese and British tastes — despite pre-return feuding that makes spats over Hong Kong seem a model of civility. "Negotiations for the

return of Weihai took longer and were harder," said local historian Liu Deyu.

"The road to Weihai's return was long, tortuous and tough," Mr. Liu said in an interview on the city's Liugong Island, where British naval officers once admired one of China's finest natural harbours from the verandas of their villas.

Despite often acrimonious negotiations that spanned a quarter of a century and the fall of the last Qing emperor in 1911, the final handover was a cordial enough affair, he said.

Gun batteries fired celebratory salutes, Scottish soldiers paraded and residents feted the last British commissioner of a territory then known as Weihaiwei before he sailed away for a well-earned holiday in Canada.

"It was a very grand day," said Mr. Liu. "Very friendly."

The same but different

Britain had taken control of Weihaiwei from China in 1898, the same year it signed a 99-year lease on the new territories of Hong Kong, but the motives for grabbing the two areas were very different.

The new territories brought living space and a more defensible border for the then 50-year-old British colony of Hong Kong. Weihaiwei was valued as a naval base to balance the Russian seizure of northeastern China's Port Arthur.

While the new territories flourished, Weihaiwei — with a roughly comparable population of around 128,000 people — languished as a semi-colonial backwater dubbed the "Cinderella of the British empire".

Britain's lease gave it control of Weihaiwei for as long as Russia controlled Port Arthur, but the territory's status became

less clear when Japan expelled the tsar's forces from the northeastern port in 1905.

Uncertainty over Weihaiwei's future cramped its development and led Hong Kong governors to push repeatedly for it to be returned to China in exchange for permanent cession of the new territories.

The failure of those efforts left the June 30, 1997, expiry date of the new territories' lease unchanged.

It also set the course for the eventual return of all of Hong Kong — and for years of attendant Sino-British argument over financial arrangements, democratic reforms and human rights protection.

Local officials and historians say the shaky British claim to Weihaiwei after 1905 and prior agreements with other colonial powers that limited economic development meant 32 years of rule from London

left little lasting impression.

Few lasting impressions

Authorities in Weihai, a rapidly modernising city that boasts some of eastern China's cleanest waters, appear to pay little heed to remaining British-built buildings. Tourists to Liugong Island are firmly guided towards historical exhibits on a 19th century naval battle with Japan.

"Britain didn't leave much here," said Wang Fuwen, vice director of Weihai's High Technology Development Zone. "None of their influence remains."

Despite official lack of interest, elegant colonial structures are still to be found hidden among Weihai's new glass and steel hotels and office blocks, and the British imperial age lives on in folk legends and the memories of the city's elderly.

Most old residents seem to remember their former British occupiers without rancour, comparing them favourably with later Japanese invaders.

"The British were pretty good. When there was famine they gave out grain. People worked on British ships as cooks and servants and the salaries were very high."

"The British were pretty good. When there was famine they gave out grain," said retired official Wang Xuechun. "People worked on British ships as cooks and servants and the salaries were very high."

British female bathing habits were clearly a real eye-opener for young Li Hongjun, now a 73-year-old pensioner.

"The most special thing about them was...they just covered their upper body,"

he said. "They wouldn't let their breasts be seen but you could see their lower parts."

Some residents repeat folk legends that Britain's

Queen Elizabeth and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher were born in Weihai, despite government attempts to erase such myths.

"That was Thatcher's father's house," cackled one elderly stallholder on Liugong Island as she rushed to point out a non-descript villa before being hushed into silence by scandalised local officials.

"The newspapers have already explained that these stories are not true," said historian Liu.

Model for Hong Kong?

Hong Kong residents unsure of the future under Chinese rule and searching for clues in the history of Weihaiwei are unlikely to find much comfort there.

The end of imperial free-port status hit the local economy hard and prompted public protests within days of the handover.

China's weakness meant freedom from foreign rule was only temporary. Japanese troops occupied Weihai in early 1938, plunging the area into years of deprivation.

But Mr. Liu said modern China's might and the autonomy promised to Hong Kong meant there was no danger of history repeating itself after this year's handover.

"Things are different now," he said.

Gulf-EU ties hurt by low investment, trade gap

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states want a strong relationship with the European Union (EU) but such plans are blocked by the low EU investment in the region and the growing trade gap, a Gulf official has said.

Although the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have more than \$150 billion in assets in the EU, investment by the European group in the Gulf is very low, said Mohammed Al Mulla, secretary general of the Damman-based Union of GCC Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"The EU is the top commercial partner of the GCC, with trade exceeding \$35 billion a year. The GCC's investments in the EU also exceed \$150 billion," he told the official emirates news agency WAM.

"Such figures underscore the deep relationship between the two sides despite the presence of problems which are obstructing the growth of such relations, including the growing trade gap in favour of the Europeans, the EU ten-

dency for protectionism against Gulf petrochemical exports, the very low EU investment in the GCC and the possible EU carbon tax."

Mr. Mulla said the trade balance recorded a surplus of around \$12 billion in favour of the EU in 1995 after scoring a deficit in the early 1980s.

Experts attributed the reversal of the trade balance in favour of the EU to the sharp decline in oil prices and a steady rise in EU exports to the GCC, which produces nearly a fifth of the global oil supplies.

This is in contrast with Japan, which has suffered from a large deficit in its trade with Gulf states given its large crude imports from the region. GCC governments have sought to reduce the deficit with the EU through increasing exports but such plans have been blocked by what they said were the high customs tariffs imposed by the EU on Gulf petrochemical exports.

Several years of negotiations between the two sides have produced no agreement on the proposed free trade zone that could open the lucrative European markets for Gulf exports of chemicals, aluminium and other products.

"Above all, there are problems that are still hindering an agreement on the free trade zone," Mr. Mulla said. "There should be efforts to find a system for a better relationship that takes into account the interests of both sides."

Mr. Mulla said businessmen from the GCC and the EU would meet in Riyadh soon to discuss joint projects and boosting exports to Europe.

The May 20-22 conference is part of an agreement between the two groups to hold periodical talks to strengthen economic cooperation.

"Such a conference will provide Gulf companies with a forum to develop a serious and active dialogue with the European partners," Mr. Mulla said.

Mulki: Work is underway to finalise intellectual property rights law

BY Mahmoud Masharqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Trade, Industry and Supply Minister Hani Mulki Saturday stressed Jordan's readiness to start immediate negotiations to initial an intellectual property rights (IPR) agreement between Jordan and the U.S.

Dr. Mulki said: "Work is underway to finalise an intellectual property rights law. In an answer to a question whether there is a time set for signing such an agreement, Dr. Mulki said: "There is no specific date but certainly we expect to initial it soon after signing an agreement on promoting investments with the U.S. which will be signed in Amman by the end of this month."

Dr. Mulki noted that issuing such a law is a dire need since Jordan is about to join the World Trade Organisation soon after signing a partnership agreement with European Union. He pointed out that joining such world blocs requires intellectual property rights law.

U.S. Trade Representative Charles Barshefsky said that it will file trade complaints with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for violations of global property protection of what he referred to as "Special 301."

The "Special 301" annual report of IPR, which is required by the U.S. trade law, was issued at the end of last month listing IPR practices. The report said that the Jordanian "1992 copyright law is cumbersome and falls short of international standards in most respects" and states that in practice, the law is undermined by the "lack of effective enforcement mechanism."

For his part, commercial attaché at the United States embassy in Amman, Garry Grappo, expected an agreement on intellectual property rights will be signed with Jordan in less than a year.

ADB dismisses U.S., European fears of increased trade with Asia

FUKUOKA, Japan (AFP) — Unskilled workers in rich industrialised countries have more to fear from technological advances than increased trade with the Asian region, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has said.

In a special study, the ADB agreed, increased trade between rich and poor nations "may exert downward pressure on the wages of unskilled labour in industrial economies" — as shown by the rise of Japanese car production in the 1960s and similar trends now underway in South Korea and Taiwan.

This process of capital and skill deepening in developing economies could affect incomes in industrial economies unless they move further up the technology ladder. Moreover, with increased globalisation, capital can flow more easily from advanced to developing economies to take advantage of lower wages," the Manila-based bank said.

The study noted this process was already under political attack by unions in the United States — where it is known as "outsourcing," and in Europe "where it is widely disparaged as social dumping."

"The overall impact of

internationalisation is, however, hard to measure," the ADB said, noting wages of unskilled workers in rich countries might fall for other reasons as well — notably technology.

"While computers, new forms of telecommunications, automated production processes and other technology advances increase the productivity of and create new jobs for those skilled workers who know how to use them, they reduce the demand for many unskilled jobs," the bank added.

The ADB noted "a number of studies has stressed that the increasing gap in wages between skilled and unskilled workers in Europe and the United States is the result not only of trade pressures, but also of technological changes which tend to favour skilled workers relative to unskilled workers."

"Most studies suggest that both trade and technology have played a role in widening inequalities, but almost all studies attribute half or more of the widening of wage inequalities to technological trends and somewhat less than half to trade," the bank found.

"Even if imports from developing countries have

heightened wage inequality or caused unemployment of low-skilled workers, this does not make the case for protection," the ADB stressed. "Rather, industrial countries should respond by investing in upgrading their labour or devising mechanisms that 'insure' unskilled and immobile labour against growth from Asia."

This should generally have a "positive" effect on other regions: Asia will import more as it grows, and it will probably do so at less advantageous terms of trade. Both these trends will help increase incomes in industrial countries.

But these conclusions rest on a number of important conditions.

"Most important, they assume that future international trade in goods and services proceeds unimpeded, in particular, that the provisions of the Uruguay Round, including the dismantling of the multi-fibre arrangement, are duly implemented. They also assume that developing and industrial countries alike can facilitate orderly structural change in their economies."

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	FRF	ESP
US Dollar	-	1.6820	0.6112	1.4150	115.70	1.3712	1668.12	1.9025	5.8975
DE Mark	0.5910	-	0.3610	0.8362	68.37	0.8102	985.60	1.1243	3.3657
GB Sterling	1.6360	2.7885	-	2.3231	189.17	2.2433	2729.04	3.1125	8.3211
CH Franc	0.7067	1.19.53	0.4317	-	61.75	0.9487	1178.47	134.07	4.0251
JP Yen	0.0086	1.4818	0.5279	1.2225	-	1.1846	14.41	164.38	4.9222
CA Dollar	0.7293	1.2335	0.4455	1.0316	1.18	-	1216.10	1.3870	4.1536
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0138	0.3661	0.0848	1443.83	0.8216	-	11.40	3.4138
NL Guilder	0.5256	88.91	0.3211	74.36	60.77	0.7205	876.57	-	2.9640
FR Franc	0.1755	0.2970	0.1072	24.8333	20.20	0.2406	33.39	33.3900	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7504	0.3770	3.6402	0.3023	3.6728	1538.00	3.3895
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2972	0.5324	5.1415	0.4269	5.1877	2172.32	4.7874
GB Sterling	0.3666	0.1688	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0806	0.98	410.09	0.9038
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	9.9488	-	9.86	0.8018	9.74	4079.90	0.9913
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0303	1.0303	-	0.0830	1.01	422.50	0.9311
Kuwait Dinar	3.3085	2.3424	12.4083	1.2472	12.04	-	12.15	5068.50	0.9311
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0211	1.0206	0.9911	0.0823	-	418.74	0.9228
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4803	2.4385	0.2451	2.3658	0.1965	2.3881	-	2.2038
Egyptian	0.2950	0.2088	1.1085	0.1112	1.0740	0.0892	1.0836	453.78	-

Energy									
Commodity	Last	Previous							
Brent	20.85	19.80							
W. Texa	0.00	21.25							
Bonny	20.85	19.80							
Dubai	18.48	18.50							
UL Gas	190.00	190.00							

Metal Prices									
Commodity	Unit	Price							
Gold (oz's)	344.3	344.8							
Silver (oz's)	4.88	4.7							
Platinum (oz's)	391.45	392.45							
AL (3 Months)	1667	1670							
CU (3 Months)	2470	2475							
Zinc (3 Months)	1344	1348							
Lead (3 Months)	627	631							
NI (3 Months)	7810	7840							

Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Change	% Change	High	Low	Open	Close	Settle	Prev
New York	DOW JONES	7194.67	-138.88	-1.89	7329.01	7190.55	7333.55	-	-
New York	S&P 500	828.75	-12.13	-1.44	841.88	828.15	841.88	-	-
London	FT-SE 100	4893.9	12.7	0.27	4723.7	4886.7	4881.2	-	-
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20324.73	288.42	1.34	20347.5	20080.8	20086.3	-	-
Paris	CAC 40	2784.28	8.27	0.3	2804.51	2771.89	2776.01	-	-
Frankfurt	DAX	3604.55	42.44	1.19	3606.81	3590.21	3662.11	-	-

Energy									
Commodity	Unit	Price							
Coffee (c/lbs)	278	Spot							
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1484	Spot							
Sugar (\$/ton)	322.8	Spot							
Wheat (\$/ton)	169	Spot							
Soya (c/lbs)	23.72	Spot							
Tea (slg/kg)	167	Spot							
Barley (\$/bush)	0	Spot							
Rice (\$/ton)	480	Spot							

JOD Cross Rates									
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FR Franc	0.1755	0.2970	0.1072	24.8333	20.20	0.2406	33.39	33.3900	-

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Overfill
- Tiff
- Undermines
- Type of coat?
- Seagoing vessel
- Canadian native tribe
- Toward the mouth
- Start of a story, briefly
- Let
- Pale
- Vegetable
- Provençal song
- Vat
- Florida city
- The — on the punkin'
- servant
- Hosiery shade
- mode
- Accomplish a financial coup
- Before to a bard
- Great Lake
- Thin in tone
- Transform
- Hurler
- Timetable abbr.
- Cascade range peak
- Calumet's cousin
- Lawyer's levy
- Bone-dry
- Cocktail garnish
- Flag component
- Order to a broker
- Crooked one
- Monterrey money
- Not aweater
- Mrs. Truman
- B.A. word

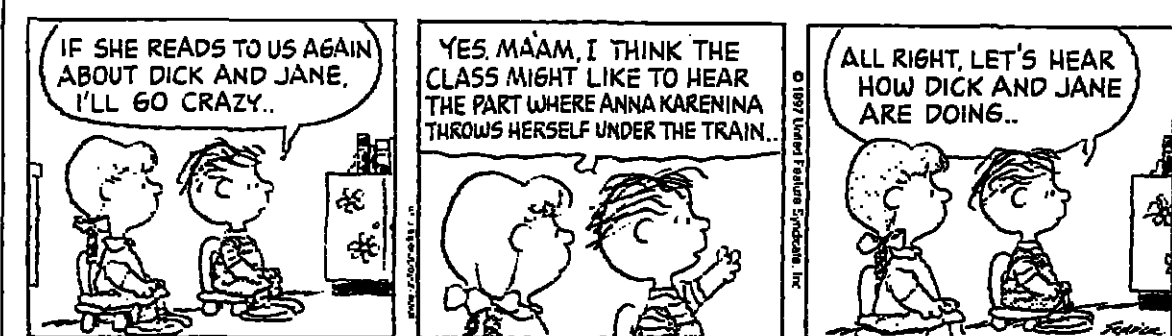
by Alan Olschwang

WARD	ABCD	SPAIN
AGEE	DIRE	PLUTO
DISCOMB	BOBULATED	
ELI	BELS	PECOS
REDWINE	DEEM	
EAT	SPURN	AFE
PANGEA	OPA	STER
INTERNAL	LAFFAIRS	
STIR	TEL	TAXCUT
ASA	BEFIT	COR
LOON	NEATNESS	
HASAN	ARGO	DIP
AIRCRAFT	CARRIER	
BREAD	BEET	CAVE
STARS	ISLE	ALLEE

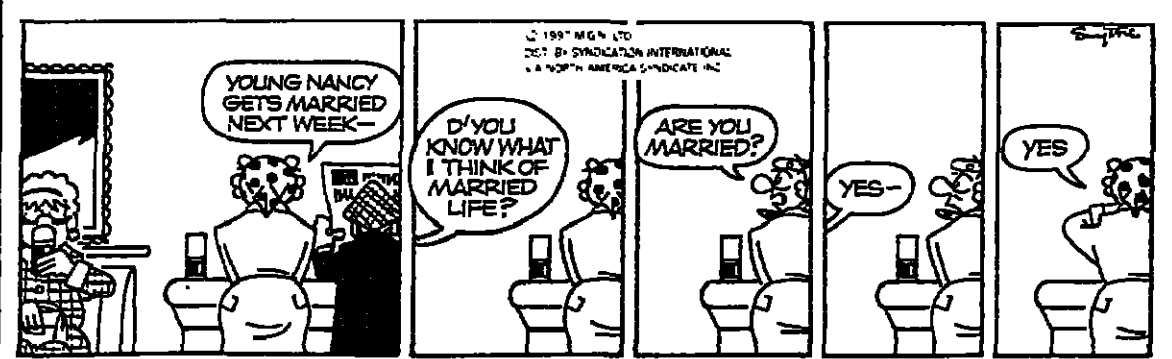
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DOWN									
1 Put away	39 What's left over	51 Pitcher							
2 Nimbus	44 Moniker	52 Stir up							
3 Comes to pass	45 Circle part	53 Spill the beans							
4 Remnant	46 Candles	55 Bridge position							
5 Pizza orders	48 Heavy nail	56 Cupid							
6 Tree with nullike seeds	49 Apiary dwellings	59 Health resort							
7 Bone cavities	50 Sala holder								

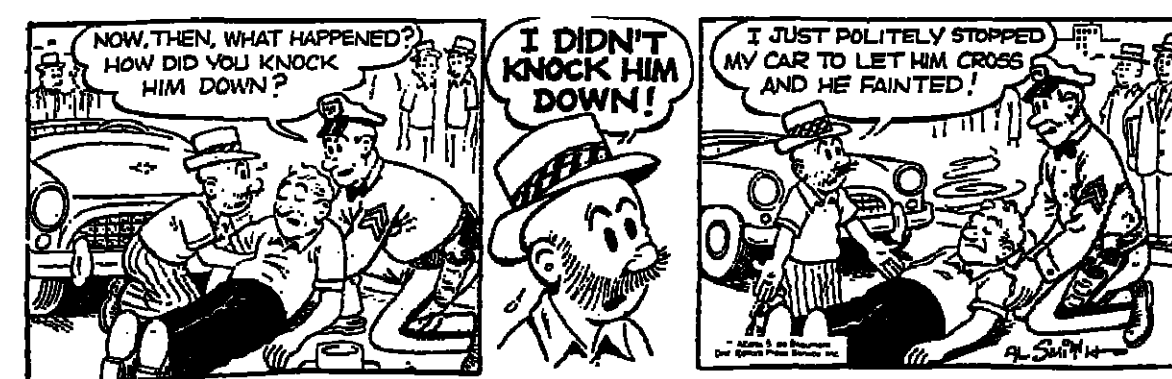
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MAY 18, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson,
Astrologer, Carroll
Richter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You may find it hard to go along today with plans you have made for the day, however, persevere and everything works out fine. Later tonight and you can consult with fellow associates and develop a method of operation.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Solve the financial affairs today which pertain to you and you can be quite successful. Use wisdom and everything should work out well towards your gaining much prosperity in the days ahead for your efforts.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You may run hither and you today trying to gain a personal desire, however, relax and use positive methods of operation. Later tonight will be good for you to seek out the advice of knowledgeable persons.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You can go after your personal goals privately today, however, you need to make

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Jordan Electric Power
Company boosts net
profit by 33 per cent

THE JORDAN Electric Power Company earned a total of JD109.05 million from power sales last year compared to JD91.90 million in 1995 as sales grew by 9.1 per cent (8.8 per cent in 1995). By adding other income, the total earnings for 1996 amounted to JD111.49 million. By taking into consideration JD105.73 million in operational costs and other expenditures, JD2.05 million in bank interest and various administrative expenses, the company was able to post a net profit of JD3.2 million last year, 33 per cent higher than the JD2.4 million net profit recorded in 1995.

The company's total assets increased by 13 per cent as they reached JD170.4 million of which JD120.4 million were fixed assets. The shareholders' equity went up by six per cent to JD25.4 million.

The shareholders will be receiving 10 per cent in cash dividends as the general assembly has approved the distribution of JD1.5 million in dividends for 1996.

According to the annual report, the company will be spending JD12.11 million on electricity projects in 1997. The number of subscribers has risen from 430,033 in 1995 to 455,204 at the end of 1996.

Deputy Chairman Marwan Madi told the general assembly that the profits achieved by the company in 1996 were noticeably higher due to collection fees of television and garbage and other charges. He said that this income is not fixed and cannot be counted upon at all in providing a reasonable rate of dividends to shareholders.

Mr. Madi called on the concerned government authorities that electricity charges from power sales achieve profits no less than the minimum rate specified in the concession agreement so as investors would be encouraged to continue investing in the shares of the company (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

Arab Aluminium Industry
Company distributing
JD1.5 million in dividends

SALES AND profit posted by the Arab Aluminium Industry Company (Aral) were lower last year as they amounted to JD15.5 million and JD2.8 million compared to JD16.2 million and JD2.6 million respectively in 1995. However, the general assembly approved the recommendation of the board of directors to distribute JD1.5 million in cash dividends at a rate of 25 per cent.

According to the annual report, Aral's current assets dropped from JD9.5 million in 1995 to JD8.2 million in 1996. However, due to a large investment in the National Aluminium Industrial Company (NAIC), the fixed assets of Aral increased from JD7.2 million in 1995 to JD9.4 million at the end of 1996. As such, total assets at the end of last year amounted to JD17.6 million compared to JD16.8 million in 1995. Current liabilities declined from JD4.6 million to JD4.1 million in 1996.

The NAIC was established in 1994 and Aral's investment amounts to 75 per cent of the JD6 million capital of the company which is expected to start operations this month (Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

Jordanian company finds difficulties
in marketing 'credit insurance'By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Unpaid debts cause any company to cower, but American, Canadian and European enterprises have been protecting themselves through "credit insurance," a concept which is beginning to take root in Jordan.

According to General Manager Daoud Al Kurd the Arab Life and Accident Insurance Co. is pioneering the business and has been selling credit insurance for the last year and a half. It is the only company in Jordan that

sells this type of policy. Mr. Kurd told the Jordan Times that though credit insurance has yet to catch on in Jordan, he believes its benefits will soon become a necessity for manufacturers and dealers.

"We find difficulties in marketing this type of business, but it seems now that clients are becoming more and more aware of this type of policy, especially the banks," Mr. Kurd said. "No factory (in Europe, Canada or the United States) can transact business without this policy."

A Canadian insurance

agency described credit insurance as a policy "designed to protect your company's commercial receivable accounts from devastating effects of a loss caused by the insolvency or non-payment of accounts by one or more of your customers."

In simpler terms, insurance agencies pay the policyholder when the debtor does not.

"The manufacturer pays us the premium ... if any of the dealers have default of payment and cannot pay the amount due to the wholesaler (manufacturer) we go and pay that amount to the whole-

seller," Mr. Kurd explained.

The policyholders are therefore free from the litigation process of collecting payments from their debtors, as the insurance agency handles the court procedures and retrieves the payment from the debtor.

Arab Life offers three types of credit insurance. The first, consumer insurance, deals primarily with car dealerships or any company that sells its product on a payment plan. With this type of policy, the insurance agency will in fact repossess the car if the owner

cannot fulfill his or her payment contract.

Mr. Kurd said credit insurance premiums for cars are the most expensive. For a JD20,000 car, a dealer would pay an initial premium of one and a half dinar a month. That translates into about 0.7 per cent of the cost of the car. The premium, however, gradually decreases as the buyer continues to pay his or her instalments.

The second, trade or commercial credit, insures wholesalers and manufacturers. If, for reasons such as bankruptcy, a dealer cannot pay the wholesaler the prescribed

amount for the goods, again, the insurance agency intervenes.

The third type of credit, export credit, is the same as the policy written for commercial holders, but export policies are explicit for companies involved in foreign markets. Monthly premiums for these two policies range from 0.5 per cent to 0.6 per cent of the value of the loan.

Arab Life now insures three banks, a computer company and a furniture company in Jordan against debt and they are covering up to JD 25 million in credit.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHWEISANI											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 17/05/1997											
PART	12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
	269.000 213.000	ARAB BANK	12.1	1.53	6	620	162380	259.00	262.00	3.00	+
N	2.100 1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	9.9	0.00	51	28834	52563	1.80	1.81	.01	+
	4.500 4.000	CATRO AMMAN BANK	9.9	3.13	2	1700	8088	4.65	4.80	.15	+
	3.500 2.760	BANK OF JORDAN	11.0	0.00	2	280	853	3.07	3.05	-.02	-
	1.210 .880	MID-EAST INV. BK.	65.7	0.00	1	500	500	.95	1.00	.05	+
	2.480 2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	8.1	7.72	1	100	219	2.17	2.19	.02	+
	9.100 4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	34.2	4.08	19	7482	35467	4.75	4.75	-	-
	2.950 2.440	JOR. KENAFI BANK	19.0	0.00	10	2791	7304	2.57	2.62	.05	+
	1.050 .790	JOR. GULF BANK	4.8	8.64	11	9000	7275	.80	.81	.01	+
	3.870 1.450	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	17.1	0.00	1	150	524	3.50	3.56	.06	+
	4.050 3.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.1	3.24	3	650	2397	3.66	3.70	.04	+
	3.800 3.000	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	20.4	0.00	2	233	1056	3.27	3.27	-	-
	1.440 1.000	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	1	300	336	1.14	1.12	-.02	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 196.66			CHNG: +0.99			111	52740	278971			
+	4.550 4.150	JERUSALEM INSUR.	11.1	4.88	3	607	2487	4.15	4.10	-.05	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 114.55			CHNG: -0.13			3	607	2487			
	1.820 1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	8.1	5.95	33	19210	31983	1.64	1.68	.04	+
	1.560 1.280	IBRID ELECTRICITY	8.3	8.27	2	130	177	1.32	1.39	.07	+
T	5.250 4.100	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	21.8	2.32	5	280	1527	5.25	5.30	.05	+
	1.480 .930	MATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	65	37100	40494	1.08	1.11	.03	+
	2.200 1.170	MID. EAST HOTELS	20.6	0.00	14	4250	3692	1.30	1.35	.05	+
	3.720 2.900	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	8.0	0.00	4	4000	12140	3.00	3.08	.05	+
	1.220 .950	SARNA EDUCATION	9	0.00	2	850	842	1.00	.99	-.01	-
	2.230 1.630	UNIFIED CO.	7.9	6.63	4	700	1162	1.65	1.66	.01	+
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 109.76			CHNG: +2.29			129	66520	94016			
	3.800 3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	25.6	2.89	57	95839	326086	3.75	3.40	-.05	-
	3.500 2.710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	9.5	2.92	36	27306	93231	3.33	3.13	-.10	-
	6.100 4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.7	3.16	28	22330	139490	6.10	6.33	.23	+
+	10.400 8.720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.1	5.89	8	6593	9581	3.39	3.36	-.03	-
	7.300 6.100	ARAB TANNING	7.4	5.00	2	75	450	6.10	6.00	-.10	-
	3.260 1.650	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AGR.	9	0.00	10	2248	4328	1.92	1.96	.04	+
	7.500 6.420	JOR. WOODSTOCK MILLS	10.8	2.99	8	4500	30150	6.70	6.70	-	-
	3.980 3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	10.2	5.62	66	29260	107134	3.59	3.69	.10	+
	7.250 5.550	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	7.3	2.82	1	100	710	7.05	7.10	.05	+
	5.810 4.250	DAR ALDAMR. DV. INV.	11.6	5.30	6	1200	3642	4.85	4.72	-.07	-
	960 .450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.0	0.00	17	21900	11388	.53	.52	-.01	-
	1.310 1.020	ARAB PAPER CORP. TRD.	33.0	0.00	12	7850	8567	1.09	1.08	-.01	-
	1.520 1.010	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	3	600	860	1.10	1.10	-	-
	1.870 .540	NATIONAL TILES	8.3	10.71	13	7203	4033	.55	.55	-	-
	1.540 .700	INTERMED. PETROL. CHEM.	9	0.00	2	750	540	.73	.72	-.01	-
	1.150 .600	JOR. ROGNWOOD INDUS.	9	0.00	2	225	145	.64	.65	.01	+
	3.720 2.130	NATL. CABLE WIRE. WPC	17.5	0.00	3	300	866	2.83	2.88	.05	+
	1.170 .570	JOR. SULFUR-CEMENT	9	0.00	16	6900	4508	.67	.66	-.01	-
	1.670 1.120	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	18.3	4.90	2	50	127	1.42	1.43	.01	+
	2.650 1.610	UNIV. WOOD. INDUS.	9	1.17	12	5450	8279	1.50	1.54	.04	+
	1.730 1.130	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	15.7	8.55	21	7300	8648	1.18	1.17	-.01	-
	2.230 .840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.1	0.00	9	2200	1936	.89	.88	-.01	-
	2.090 1.650	EL-DAY NEHDY NEAR	9	0.00	4	1500	2490	1.66	1.66	-	-
	1.330 1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	27.5	0.00	9	6250	7335	1.17	1.17	-	-
	1.380 .860	UNION CH. & VEG.	28.5	0.00	2	1000	905	.92	.90	-.02	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 121.52			CHNG: +2.37			346	243034	774240			
GRAND TOTAL											
INDEX: 156.64			CHNG: +1.60			589	362901	1149714			
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 17/05/1997											
	.790 .410	JOR. TRADE FAC.	12.3	0.00	19	31200	14458	.46	.46	-	-
	.840 .660	UNION INV. 504	9	0.00	12	10000	2050	.68	.67	-.01	-
	.770 .370	ARAB FIB. INVEST.	9	0.00	12	10000	4851	.47	.47	-	-
	.950 .730	AL-SHARAF 754	9	0.00	1	500	245	.73	.74	.01	+
N	.950 .610	AL-DANILYAN 754	14.2	0.00	7	13414	5043	.61	.62	.02	+
	.640 .200	JOR. INDUS. MATCHES-JEMCO	9	0.00	8	14950	358	.24	.24	-	-
	.730 .510	ARAB FOOD & WOOD	9	0.00	4	600	342	.56	.57	.01	+
	.690 .420	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	53.0	0.00	11	14500	6650	.45	.46	.01	+
	.810 .400	MATL. WOOD. IND. RAMICO	8	0.00	64	158750	92448	.57	.57	-	-
	.870 .710	JORDAN STEEL	3	0.00	3	2700	2684	.72	.72	-	-
	.630 .430	ARAB ELECT. INDUS.	9	0.00	2	1250	625	.51	.50	-.01	-
	.730 .600	MIDWEST PHARM. 754	9	0.00	7	3450	1360	.64	.65	.01	+
	1.280 .860	UNION TOBACCO 754	9	0.00	8	12400	7686	.86	.87	.01	+
	.770 .550	NATL. PHARM. 654	9	0.00	8	21900	5475	.61	.60	-.01	-
	.620 .350	INDUS. ENG.	26.5	0.00	3	2600	860	.42	.43	.01	+
	.950 .750	INDUS. CERAMIC	21.0	0.00	3	1500	1300	.79	.80	.01	+
	.820 .590	NATL. POLYMER	9	0.00	12	38550	24748	.66	.64	-.02	-
	1.000 .810	NAT. ALUMINIUM 754	9	0.00	7	2641	1531	.82	.83	.02	+
	.870 .530	KID-EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	10	11000	1280	.66	.66	-	-
GRAND TOTAL											
						207	354555	183193			
T : New 12 months high											
T : New 12 months low											
H : Listed During the past 12 months											
P : P/E ratio is 100 or more											
G : Negative P/E											
N : Not in form of N/A for the most recent year											

Heat beat Knicks 95-90 to force Game 7

NEW YORK (AP)—Alonzo Mourning and Dan Majerle had their best games of the series and the Miami Heat used a flurry of 3 pointers in the fourth quarter to pull away from the suspension weakened New York Knicks for a 95-90 victory Friday night.

It forced a Game 7 in Miami on Sunday afternoon with a chance for the Heat to become just the sixth team in National Basketball Association history to successfully come back from a 3-1 deficit.

The Heat will have that chance because they overcame an emotion charged New York team still reeling from the NBA's suspension of six players — five of them Knicks for a brawl in Game 5.

New York was without its two leading scorers Patrick Ewing and Allan Houston, as well as backup point guard Charley Ward.

The Knicks overcame the loss of offence for more than three quarters, but a cold spell midway through the fourth along with the inability to stop Mourning on the inside all game long — sealed their fate.

Mourning led Miami with 23 points and 9 rebounds and Majerle added 18 points with 4 three pointers.

The Knicks will have to Game 7 without starters Larry Johnson and John Starks and will serve their suspensions Sunday.



New York Knicks forward Larry Johnson finds his way blocked by Miami Heat center Alonzo Mourning (33). The Heat won 95-90 to force Game 7 (Reuters photo)

Bulls wait for answers to questions about opponent, Jackson

CHICAGO (AP) — Time to practice, time to rest, and time to speculate on the future of their coach.

The Chicago Bulls don't know whether they'll face the New York Knicks or Miami Heat, whether the Eastern Conference finals will start Sunday or later next week, whether Phil Jackson will stay or follow the money to Disney World.

The defending NBA champions do know that they are eight victories away from their fifth title in seven years and that they are peaking at just the right time.

"We were able to find some rhythm on the offensive end," said Michael Jordan, whose team wrapped up its second-round series with Tuesday night's 107-92 victory over the Atlanta Hawks. "Before, we were just all individuals trying to do it ourselves instead of finding a way to play together."

The Bulls had been winning despite playing poorly, then they lost game 2 at home to Atlanta, causing quite a panic in Chicago, before playing progressively better in winning the next three games.

Now, the Bulls wait.

"We believe that the rest we have between now and the opening series game... will give us ample opportunity to prepare and recuperate," said Jackson, who according to published reports has received a lucrative contract offer from the Orlando Magic, "and we anticipate that the next series will be more physical, more intense."

As for Jackson's future, that's even more nebulous. Several newspapers, citing unidentified sources, said Wednesday that Orlando has offered Jackson a five-year, \$30 million contract that would put him in new Boston Celtics coach Rick Pitino's financial neighbourhood.

Jackson's current one-year, \$2.75 million contract lets him negotiate with other teams even as the Bulls pursue another title.

Jackson, agent Todd Musburger, and Bulls and Magic management either declined comment or didn't return phone calls Wednesday.

Last week, Jackson said his situation wasn't interfering with the team's preparation or play. Over the years, he has seen Jordan get involved in gambling disputes, Dennis Rodman get suspended, and various other off-court shenanigans, but the Bulls kept winning.

"This team is so used to distractions," said Jackson, who holds NBA records for winning percentage in both the regular season (.735) and the playoffs (.733). "I keep thinking there's not anything that's going to be a distraction."

Making the situation more interesting was Jordan's recent statement that he would quit if Jackson left. But Jordan, who retired in October 1993, only to return in March 1995 and win his eighth and ninth NBA scoring titles, has waffled on the subject throughout the season.

"Michael's the greatest player in the league and Phil's his ally. That's pretty fortunate for Phil, a nice situation," Bulls guard Steve Kerr said. "They're two of the very best ever at what they do and they've been through a lot of wars together. As a result, they've got a really strong bond."

For now, Jordan's main concern is getting a championship ring for his thumb.

"This is the best we've played for a long stretch of time," Jordan said. "We have to continue to improve going against New York or Miami. Defensively, they are much more intense. But we seem to be getting ourselves into a groove."

Judge declines to issue injunction, Knicks must serve suspension

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge declined to stop the suspensions of four New York Knicks, forcing Patrick Ewing and Allan Houston to miss Friday night's sixth game against the Miami Heat.

U.S. district judge Jed S. Rakoff issued his decision from the bench following a 90-minute hearing involving lawyers for the National Basketball Association and the National Basketball Players Association.

Rakoff cited Article XXXI, Section 8 of the league's collective bargaining agreement, ruling

that Commissioner David Stern had complete and final authority on disciplinary matters. The language, he said, is "so plain, so clear, so unequivocal, so on-point to the dispute that underlies this controversy."

He concluded that players will suffer a hardship, but said their dispute was not subject to the arbitration procedures in the collective bargaining agreement.

Judge Rakoff joked several times as he took 25 minutes to read his rambling decision.

"This court is sufficiently

parochial to wish that the Knicks be in every playoff in every round in every season," he said.

New York went into Friday night's game leading the best-of-7 series 3-2. The winner plays the Chicago Bulls in the Eastern Conference finals.

The NBA suspended six players for their roles in a bench-clearing brawl in Game 5 on Wednesday night, issuing the penalties the next day. The four Knicks who were suspended for one game because they left the team bench during the brawl.

Larry Johnson and John Starks, the other two players who sued, are to serve their suspensions either in Game 7 against the Heat or Game 1 against the Bulls. Charlie Ward of the Knicks and PJ Brown of the Heat, suspended for fighting, did not contest their penalties.

The players who sued claimed the NBA's decision to impose automatic one-game suspensions for leaving the bench during brawls violated the NBA's collective bargaining agreement, claiming the

league had a duty to negotiate such a rule with its union.

They asked Judge Rakoff to issue the temporary restraining order while the issue is appealed to one of the NBA's arbitrators: Ken Dam, a professor at the University of Chicago Law School or John Ferrick, the dean of Fordham University Law School.

"It is absurd to suggest the union... did not know about such a rule," NBA lawyers Howard Ganz said.

Before a standing-room only crowd in the court room — some fans were wearing business suits and ties with Knicks jerseys underneath their jackets — union lawyer Jeffrey Kessler emotionally pleaded with Judge Rakoff to issue the restraining order.

"There is no way to make them whole, there is no way to make the fans whole," Kessler said, depicting what would happen if the injunction were not issued and the arbitrator later would rule that the penalties should be reversed.

Ganz used the example of baseball and Roberto Alomar, the Baltimore second baseman whose suspension for spitting on an umpire was delayed from last year's playoffs to the first week of this season. Ganz decried "baseball's ability to take control of it and deal with it immediately to preserve... the integrity of the game."

He said the NBA would be damaged if the judge issued the restraining order and the suspension later were upheld.

"The NBA is in a pretty big pickle," Ganz said. "Is tonight's winner still the winner is Sunday's loser still the loser? Do we replay the games?"

Brown was suspended for two games, while the five Knicks were suspended for one game each, the harshest penalty handed out by the NBA in playoff history. Teams are required to have nine players in uniform, so the penalties for Starks and Johnson were delayed for a game.

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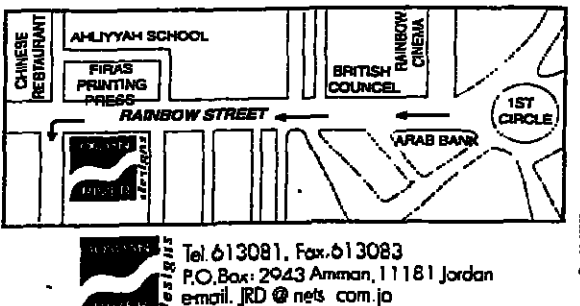
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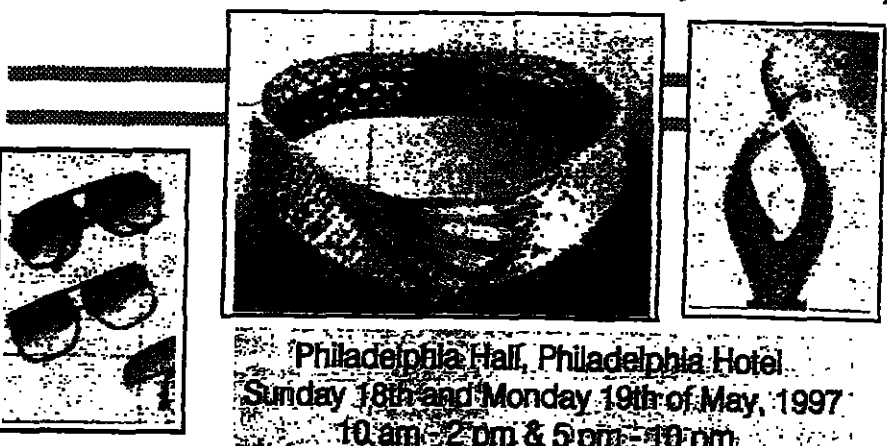
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Eight time Middle East champion Mohammad Bin Sulayyem of the United Arab Emirates gets his 7th Jordan Rally crown from HRH Prince Faisal at the prize-giving ceremony (Petra photo)



Mohammad Bin Sulayyem drives his powerful Ford Escort during the gruelling desert stages. Only 15 out of 25 participants, including five Jordanians, finished the 15th Jordan International Rally. The two-day 800-kilometre long rally included 320 kilometres of 19 special stages. Jordan's Mohammad Al Daoud was the top local competitor finishing fourth overall.

Kasparov says he wants to play Deep Blue again

NEW YORK (R) — Just days after a stunning defeat by the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue, world chess champion Garry Kasparov said on Friday he wanted to play the machine again before the end of the year.

"I want to play a longer match of 10 games with better conditions for a human player," the 34-year-old Russian grandmaster told Reuters in an interview. Kasparov, whose failure of nerve in the final game Sunday cost him the six-game match played over nine days, said he wanted to play the next contest in September or October in New York.

He said he wanted an independent specialist watching Deep Blue's computer screen during the next contest and an independent organiser.

Kasparov said he did not expect last week's contest to become so competitive because it had also been billed as an experiment in IBM's research of high-speed computers that can make complex simultaneous calculations.

"IBM should be a player, or the Deep Blue team should be a player and not involved in other aspects of this match directly," said Kasparov, who defeated a weaker and less sophisticated version of the system in Philadelphia in February 1996.

Italian Open

Rios stops Courier to reach semis

ROME (AP) — The new clay court generation mastered the old Friday when Marcelo Rios toppled Jim Courier in a three-set thriller to reach the Italian Open semi-finals.

Courier, a former two-time Italian Open and French Open champion who dominated on clay in the early 90s used to win tight matches like these.

But Rios, 21-year-old Chilean who has risen to No. 9 in the world, made fewer mistakes and prevailed 6-3, 3-5, 7-6 (7-4) in 2 1/2 hours before a packed Centre Court at the Foro Italico.

Also advancing to the semifinals were sixth seed Goran Ivanisevic, a 6-4, 6-4 winner over Australia's Scott Draper, and No. 10 Alex Corretja of Spain, who rallied to beat Morocco's Karim Alami 4-6, 7-5, 6-3.

The last semifinal berth was being decided in a late match between Alberto Berasategui and Marc-Kevin Goellner.

In the semifinals, Rios will face either Berasategui or Goellner, while Ivanisevic will play Corretja.

Courier, who has slipped to No. 24 in the world rankings and was unseeded here, misfired frequently on his big forehand and was broken twice to lose the first set. But he cut down on his errors, dictated the pace and broke Rios twice to take the second.

The third set was a match in itself, with six breaks and repeated shifts in momentum. Rios served for the match at 6-5 and went up 30-0 — two points from victory — but Courier took four straight to break and set up the decisive tiebreaker.

Rios jumped to a 3-3 lead on three unforced errors by Courier and extended the



American Jim Courier reacts after losing a point during his quarter final Italian Open match against Chilean Marcelo Rios. Rios won the match 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 to advance to the semi-finals (Reuters photo)

lead to 5-1. Courier closed to 5-4 but missed on a big forehand on the next point, on the first match point. Rios hit a backhand that skipped off the baseline and ricocheted off Courier's racket into the stands.

"I played three loose points at the beginning of the tiebreaker, and that was the difference really," Courier said. "I had the momentum going into the tiebreaker but I didn't keep it going."

Courier said he will especially remember the forehand that flew long at 5-4. "I'll hit that forehand

every time," he said. "That's the shot that built my house. Some days they go in, some days they don't. I'll keep swinging."

Courier said he was still satisfied with his performance heading into the French Open, which he won in 1991 and 1992.

"There are a lot of positive things to take out of this match leading into Paris," said Courier, who beat top-seeded Peter Sampras in the first round.

"There are times when these losses are difficult. I don't feel like this is one of those times."

Rios won the prestigious Monte Carlo Open last month and has emerged as one of the Tour's top new stars, easily recognisable by his ponytail, black shorts, black sneakers and black socks.

He said the win over Courier was one of the biggest of his career.

"Even if he doesn't have a great ranking, he's always a tough player, a great clay court player," Rios said. "I feel very proud. I will always remember this match."

Ivanisevic who eliminated Boris Becker on Thursday, looked equally sharp in beating Draper in straight sets. He said he was surprised to be playing so well after returning from a layoff with a broken finger.

"After five weeks off, I'm really hungry," he said. "Every match I'm playing better and better tennis. The break has done me good. I'm fresh."

Corretja, who has won one clay-court tournament this year and finished runner-up in the two other, is one of several Spanish clay-court experts.

He appeared in trouble against Alami who dominated the first set with a powerful first serve and forehand. But the match turned in the 12th game of the second set, with Corretja up 6-5 and Alami serving.

Alami had three game points to force a tiebreaker, but he failed to convert — twice blowing easy forehand putaways. He also got rattled by a succession of line calls that went against him.

"I got upset and that affects my mental state," he said. "I played well but was stronger mentally. That made the difference."

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNICAL COLLEGES FOR THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

The Palestinian Authority, acting through the Ministry of Higher Education, has received a grant from the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Republic towards the cost of the "The Development of Technical Colleges for the Palestinian Authority," and intends to utilise a portion of the proceeds of this grant to fund eligible payments under the contracts resulting from this invitation to bid. The Palestinian Authority has agreed and the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin, Italy has accepted, that the ILO/Turin (hereinafter referred to as the "Purchaser Representative") will assist the purchaser with the procurement of goods and related services under this invitation to bid.

The Ministry of Higher Education of Palestinian Authority now invites sealed bids from eligible for the supply of the following five packages for three technical colleges namely Al Aroub, Tulkarem and Ramallah.

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- Bid Package No.4:** Local area networks, computing equipment and software.
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Prospective bidders may obtain further information from and inspect the bidding documents at the respective addresses indicated below (Local Bidders at the Ministry of Higher Education, Foreign Bidders at the ITC/ILO, Turin).

A complete set of the Bidding Documents or any package may be obtained by any interested bidder on submission of a written application to the addresses below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of U.S.\$ 50.

Only bidders who purchase the Bidding Documents in their names are eligible for submission of bids. Applicants who wish to receive the Bidding Documents by courier should arrange payment of courier fees separately. In case of dispatch by mail or any other mode, the purchaser cannot be held responsible for late delivery or loss of the documents mailed to the prospective bidder.

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Rebels enter Zaire capital; Kabila claims power

Kabila reported to change the name of the country to 'Democratic Republic of Congo'

Kabila fulfills a 40-year dream

KINSHASA (R) — Rebel leader Laurent Kabila proclaimed himself head of state of Zaire Saturday as his forces entered the capital Kinshasa and departed President Mobutu Sese Seko's residence.

Residents of the suburbs, hailing the end of over three decades of Mr. Mobutu's rule, took to the streets waving palm fronds and welcoming the rebels with food and drink.

Sporadic shooting rang out in parts of the usually bustling city of five million people but France, one of five Western nations with troops across the river in Congo, said there were no immediate plans to evacuate foreign nationals.

Mr. Kabila, in a statement read at a news conference in the southeastern city of Lubumbashi, said he was taking over as head of state with agreement of generals in Kinshasa.

"According to reports from the generals, everyone was ready to take orders from me," he said, one day after Mr. Mobutu left Kinshasa for his home region of Gbadolite.

One aide said he was still there Saturday.

Mr. Mobutu's emergency rule prime minister, General Likulia Bolongo, called on all fighting army units to return to their barracks in a statement on state radio.

Rebels later moved into the radio station unopposed, witnesses said. The radio told the nation to expect a message from Mr. Kabila.

Earlier, a diplomat said presidential guards from Mr. Mobutu's Ndege tribe had killed defence minister and army chief of staff general Mahle Licko Bokongo.

Diplomats said Mabele, killed in Kinshasa Friday night, had been planning to meet Mr. Kabila to discuss handing over power.

Mr. Mobutu's son, Kongolo, a presidential guard captain, fled across the Zaire river to Brazzaville, capital of Congo, on board a speedboat with about 20 other men, witnesses said.

Mr. Kabila, 56, and his rebels took up arms in October in a dispute over Zairean nationality for ethnic Tutsis. They now control most of what is potentially one of Africa's richest nations, with a wealth of minerals and fertile farm land.

The rebels refer to Zaire as the Congo, reverting to the name used after independence from Belgium in 1960 and before Mr. Mobutu renamed Africa's third largest country in 1971.

"Mr. Laurent desire Kabila assumes from today the functions of the head of state of the Democratic Republic of the Congo," a statement from his Alliance of Democratic Forces

for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) said.

Mr. Kabila, who has opposed Mr. Mobutu for more than 30 years, said he would set up a transitional government of public salvation within 72 hours and told Mr. Mobutu's army to lay down its arms.

He also pledged a constituent assembly within 60

Lemba, local people marched in the streets and waved palm fronds. Witnesses reported senior officers and soldiers handing over weapons to rebels there.

Trucks of Zairean soldiers passed by with white bandannas tied around their heads, apparently signalling that they had gone over to the rebels.

Zaire soldiers lay next to a shot-up luxury car. Kabila soldiers in their trademark rubber Wellington boots rested in the shade.

A source at the presidency in Kinshasa and other sources in the city said that members of Mr. Mobutu's armed forces were fleeing west on the road out of the city to lower Zaire. Mr. Mobutu, who seized

LUBUMBASHI (AFP) — Rebel Chief Laurent Kabila, who Saturday proclaimed himself president of Zaire, started dreaming of toppling Mobutu Sese Seko as ruler of this giant nation close to 40 years ago.

Saturday, after announcing in this southern stronghold that he had taken power as his troops entered Kinshasa, he declared himself — with a wide grin — to be "very happy."



Zairean civil guardsmen patrol through the streets of Zaire's capital to try to stop looting after pledging their alliance to the rebel forces on Saturday. Small groups of Laurent Kabila's rebels walked through the suburbs of Zaire's capital Kinshasa and residents flocked onto the streets to welcome them (Reuters photo)

Sporadic automatic weapons fire was heard in different parts of Kinshasa early in the day but had tapered off by afternoon.

Kabila forces took over a 19-storey tower which houses state broadcaster voice of Zaire, as well as the information ministry. Zaire army guards had melted away the day before.

A handful of rebels entered the building unopposed, a radio worker said. Several dozen others joined them later. Near the Chinese-built soccer stadium, the bodies of two

power in 1965, is suffering from cancer. Now 66, he is reputed to have amassed a huge personal fortune over the years. Western powers supported him as a cold war bastion against Soviet communism.

Characteristically defiant, he did not resign as head of state, as demanded by Mr. Kabila, but his abrupt departure triggered intense speculation that he was on his way to exile. Diplomats said Morocco or France were likely destinations.

Mobutu family assets in Switzerland frozen

BERN (AFP) — The Swiss government froze assets of the family of ousted Zairean strongman Mobutu Sese Seko administered from Switzerland with immediate effect, officials said Saturday.

People holding or administering his funds should contact the Finance Ministry, the Foreign and Finance Ministries said in a joint statement.

Friday, Swiss authorities said they were impounding a \$5.6-million villa in Switzerland owned by Mr. Mobutu, who stepped down Friday. Rebels took over the capital Kinshasa Saturday.

The Swiss Federal Justice, Police and Foreign Affairs Departments said that the order to impound the villa, in Savigny near Lausanne, followed a request from the public prosecutor in the rebel power base of Lubumbashi, southern Zaire. Zairean rebels who marched into the capital Kinshasa Saturday plan to launch a worldwide operation to hunt down the assets that Mr. Mobutu and his families and friends are said to have amassed abroad, claiming that they were the fruits of massive-scale embezzlement.

In the residential district of

Polls show Canada's Conservatives gaining ground after debates

OTTAWA (R) — A series of poll results released Friday showed Canada's Conservative Party gaining strength in their election campaign after two televised leaders' debates early this week.

In the first surveys released since the Monday and Tuesday debates, voters declared Conservative leader Jean Charest the winner, helping his party narrow the gap between it and Prime Minister Jean Chretien's leading Liberal Party.

Still, polls conducted by Gallup Canada Inc. and Strategic Council showed the country's governing Liberals still well ahead in the runup to the June 2 election.

The results were similar to those released earlier Friday by Reuters and conducted by Zogby International. In the Gallup poll, con-

ducted May 7-12, the Liberals had the support of 46 per cent of decided voters surveyed, the Conservatives 19 per cent, Reform 14 per cent, the New Democratic Party (NDP) nine per cent and the separatist Bloc Quebecois 11 per cent, the Canadian Press News Agency reported. Twenty-nine per cent surveyed were undecided.

Gallup's poll of 1,004 people had a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The last Gallup poll done from April 10-16 said the Liberals had support of 55 per cent of those surveyed, the Conservatives 15 per cent, Reform 10 per cent, the Bloc 11 per cent and the NDP nine per cent.

The Strategic Council poll, commissioned by Baton Broadcasting and the Toronto Star newspaper, put

the Liberals at 40 per cent, Conservatives 23 per cent, Reform 16 per cent and the NDP and Bloc at 10 per cent each, Canadian Press reported.

It was conducted among 1,200 voters four days before and after this week's debates. The poll has a margin of error of 2.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The Reuters-Zogby poll showed the Liberals ahead with 45.4 per cent of the decided vote, to 20.4 per cent for the Conservatives, 15.8 per cent for Reform, 9.9 per cent for the NDP and 7.5 per cent for the Bloc.

The Liberal lead over the Conservatives was narrowed from 31 percentage points in the last Reuters-Zogby poll conducted May 1-4.

Hong Kong stamps reinstate queen's head

HONG KONG (R) — The Hong Kong post office will reinstate the queen's head on a set of stamps for just one day, the last day of British rule in the territory, a Hong Kong newspaper said.

The five Hong Kong dollars (\$0.64) sheet bearing various crowns, including that of the current queen, will be issued June 30 and can only be legally used on that day, the South China Morning Post said.

At midnight, the stamps will be unusable as Hong Kong reverts to Chinese rule, ending more than 150 years of London rule. But the newspaper quoted a post office spokesman as saying the stamps could be exchanged at post office counters for crownless stamps of the same value in July.

Hong Kong is purging icons of British rule as it zeroes in on the handover. Stamps and new coins no longer show the queen's head and many clubs have dropped their "royal" prefixes.

New York judge drops charges against Danish baby controversy

NEW YORK (R) — A New York City judge Friday dropped criminal charges against a Danish woman who was arrested and briefly jailed after leaving her baby parked in a stroller outside a Manhattan restaurant.

The case sparked trans-Atlantic debate after Danish actress Annette Sorensen was jailed for two days Saturday and her 14-month-old baby put into foster care for four days in what her lawyer described as a "clash of cultures."

Ms. Sorensen, 30, and the baby's American father, Exavier Wardlaw, left the baby outside an East Village restaurant while they were having a drink and watching her through the window, police said.

Passers-by, who said 14-month-old Liv was cold and crying, called police.

The mother's attorneys said Ms. Sorensen did not think twice

about leaving the child outside the restaurant because it was common practice in Copenhagen and a Danish newspaper called on President Bill Clinton to apologise when he visits Denmark in July.

But city officials questioned the wisdom of being so trusting in New York.

"Leaving a child unattended on a city street for an hour in New York seems to me pretty inappropriate," said Nicholas Scoppetta, head of the city's Administration of Children's Services.

Ms. Sorensen smiled at a crowd of waiting reporters as she left the Manhattan Criminal Court after Friday's hearing. Her baby, with whom she was reunited Wednesday night, was not with her.

"I am very happy for the result. I will now go home to my daughter and as soon as possible I will go home to Denmark," she said. She declined to com-

ment when asked how she felt about her treatment by New York City police.

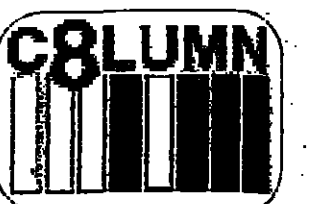
Under terms of the deal reached before Judge Michael Gross by her attorney, the Manhattan district attorney and the Danish consulate, the criminal charges of endangering the welfare of a child were dismissed and the case will be sealed in six months.

"It is our belief that this was a clash of cultures and a lack of understanding," her attorney Todd Barnett said.

Ms. Sorensen still must appear in family court Wednesday.

Her attorney says she has a plane ticket to leave the United States on May 27.

Ms. Sorensen had been in the United States less than 48 hours when her daughter was taken from her.



Tie a must to join French society — minister

PARIS (R) — A member of the French cabinet said Friday immigrants must wear a coat and tie if they hope to succeed in working their way into the French culture. "For integration (into the French culture) to succeed, you need a coat and tie," French Junior Minister for Urban Affairs Eric Raoult said in an interview on Europe 1 Radio. "Integration is finding a place, not taking another's place," Raoult said in remarks certain to feed charges that the centre-right government is appealing to voters of the far-right National Front to win France's May 25-June 1 parliamentary election. "Mamadou, if he is here legally, must wear a suit and tie, his wife must respect the laws of this country, he must have a certain attitude towards integration — and we must not see the same Mamadous in the same places" said Raoult, a member of President Jacques Chirac's Gaullist Rally for the Republic. "The correct attitude should be one of children in school," he added. Many of France's African immigrants wear the flowing robes typical of their home countries rather than a coat and tie, and Mamadou is a common name in France's former West African colonies.

Majority of Peruvian judges arrive late for work

LIMA (R) — Slothfulness has become a way of life in the Peruvian judiciary, with seven out of every 10 judges arriving late for work, according to a study. "I'm ashamed to speak of the results of today's spot check," Luis Iglesias, of the Magistrates' Control Office, told Reuters. "Roughly 70 per cent of judges turn up late to their offices." control office members paid two surprise visits to Lima courts Tuesday and Friday. Their initial check found that 90 per cent of judges were not at work on time, but the arrival rate had picked up by 20 per cent for Friday's second visit. Iglesias said if the judges continued arriving late, the control office would punish each judge with a fine.

Colombian police pull plug on Narco Telecom Centre

BOGOTA (R) — Police pulled the plug on a sophisticated telecommunications centre in the Colombian capital that drug lords used to coordinate their illicit business activities around the globe. "We've left Colombia's drug cartels incommunicado," national police chief General Rosso Jose Serrano said of the clandestine communications office, which operated out of a warehouse on the west side of Bogota. Serrano, who said the centre was equipped with an estimated \$10 million worth of high-tech communications equipment including a satellite telephone, likened it to an underworld version of Colombia's state-run telephone company, Telecom. All of the country's top drug gangs were believed to have used the centre to coordinate worldwide smuggling and money laundering operations, he said.

Hong Kong boy's tall tale about skipping school

HONG KONG (R) — A 12-year-old Hong Kong boy clambered 25 floors down a drain pipe to avoid his mother finding out he had skipped school, newspapers reported Saturday. Yeung Yam was at home Friday playing a video game when he heard his mother return early. The boy climbed out the kitchen window and scaled down the pipe on the side of his high-rise building. But his escape plan was thwarted after startled residents saw him outside their windows and called the police. He was taken to hospital for observation and later released, the paper said.